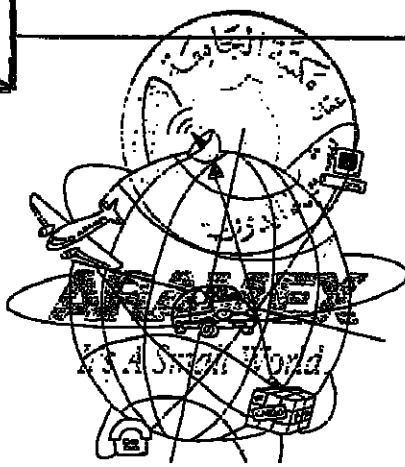


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AMMAN, 4-10 JANUARY, 1996, VOLUME 6, NUMBER 36, 350 fils

اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Deputies debate budget, highlight issues of poverty, price hikes

By Hamdan Al Hajj

Special to The Star

THE LOWER House of Parliament concludes Thursday its three-day discussion of the draft budget law for 1996. The proposed budget amounts to just below JD 1 billion. Deputies who spoke during the debate called on the Government to deal with a number of issues paramount among which are unemployment, poverty, rising prices of basic supplies, foreign debt, comprehensive health insurance, the enhancement of the National Aid Fund, strengthening the Armed Forces, Public Security and Civil Defence services, and making the monthly increment of civil servants of JD10 effective on 1 January and not 1 May.

The Financial Committee (FC) of the Lower House presented its recommendations on the proposed budget earlier in the week. Its report was read by the committee's rapporteur, Deputy Muner Soubar. The committee's recommendations included, among other things:

- Putting an end to price hikes, coupled with the enactment of strict control to prevent price increases and the issuing of an anti-monopoly law.
- Creating more opportunities for investments with a view to attracting a larger work force.
- Reconsidering the method of distribution of food coupons to needy citizens.
- Granting direct cash subsidies to poor and needy families, and adjusting bread prices.



■ Conducting a real and accurate survey of the poor and those who fall below the poverty line.

■ Facilitating customs measures and reducing red-tape and bureaucratic procedures for investors, and establishing high standards to ensure transparency.

■ Equalizing the salaries of military pensioners (who are included in the Social Security Law) with those of the civil service.

■ Organizing the labor market and monitoring foreign workers' observance of the necessary and obligatory requirements of work permits.

■ Enacting a comprehensive health program for all citizens, and putting it into effect this

year, starting first with those who are below the line of absolute poverty, including permanent day-wagers at the municipalities, provided that the system covers every citizen within three years.

■ Establishing a second state

hospital in Amman with a view to alleviate pressure from Al Bashir state hospital.

■ Reducing complicated bureaucracy in the Government's administration departments, and promoting their productivity.

■ Reviewing the validity of maintaining certain ministries and studying the possibility of integrating some ministries to save unnecessary expenses.

In another development, Jordan will embark on a program of economic reform for the next three years (1996-1998). The program, which will be implemented in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, aims to achieve the following:

- Increase self-reliance.
- Build up the Kingdom's

reserves of foreign currency to reach \$920 million this year, and to preserve the dinar's exchange rate.

■ Reduce the deficit in the current balance of payment.

■ Sustain a 4 percent annual increase in the general price level.

■ Tighten Government expenses.

■ Reduce the burden of the country's foreign debt.

■ Reduce the maximum rate of customs duties, including fees and other taxes, from 70 percent to 50 percent in 1996, and to 40 percent in 1997.

■ Enforce the Government's regulatory role and facilitate the private sector's participation in economic development.

■ Achieve a high standard of investment (about 34 percent of the GDP).

■ Rationalize the consump-

Continued on page 2

Sud-Liban: Réveil au son des canons

A LIRE p. 12 dans LE JOURDAIN



King to visit Israel next week Barak says Jordan, Israel will sign accords

AMMAN (Star)—Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak paid a one-day visit to Jordan Tuesday and met separately with His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Sharif Zaid Ben Shaker and Foreign Minister Abdel Karim Kabariti. It was Mr Barak's first official visit to Jordan since he assumed his post last month.

His talks with the King focused on bilateral relations, progress on the Syrian-Israeli track, Israel's pull out from Palestinian territories and regional issues.

Mr Barak told reporters after meeting the King that Jordan and Israel will sign five bilateral accords under the October

1994 peace treaty. Mr Barak said the new agreements will cover telecommunications, transport, maritime borders, science and technology and cooperation between the cities of Ajlun and Eilat. Speaking to reporters at Raghada Palace, the King said peace between Jordan and Israel was an example for others and that the coming era will be of building peace for future generations. The King said the Palestinian track is moving in the right direction and that Jordan was satisfied with that. He added that Jordan seeks a comprehensive regional peace.

The King confirmed that he will visit Israel next week. The 10 January visit was scheduled

for an earlier time, but was postponed after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The King participated in Mr Rabin's funeral in November in Jerusalem.

During next week's visit the King will participate in ceremonies honoring those who contributed to the cause of peace. He is also expected to call on two Jordanian soldiers being treated in Israel.

The King told reporters that Jordanian are adjusting to the new situation, but the majority supports peace.

Both the King and Mr Barak avoided making statements about internal Iraqi issues, but

Continued on page 2

Observers criticize Palestinians' handling of campaign

By Mary Curtius

LA Times-Washington Post News Service
JERUSALEM—European observers on Monday blasted the Palestinian Authority for its handling of the campaign that is supposed to produce an elected self-governing authority for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"Enough is enough," said Carl Lidbom, head of the European Electoral Unit, in a statement he faxed to reporters complaining about irregular election procedures. Lidbom's complaints were echoed by Kari Volan, head of the Norwegian observer delegation. More than 600 international observers are expected to monitor the elections, scheduled for Jan. 20.

Both observers took issue with Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat's recent presidential decrees expanding the number of members who will serve on the Palestinian self-governing council. When he added members to the council, Arafat extended the deadline for candidates to file their nominating petitions, an act that allowed more people to run for the council but shortened the election campaign to two weeks.

"A fair campaign is a prerequisite for fair elections, and two weeks are in all respects an extremely short period for this crucial activity," Volan said.

The criticism is embarrassing for the PLO, which spent months arguing with the Israelis over the importance of having international monitors during the negotiations that led to the signing of the September 1993 Israeli-PLO peace accord. The Israelis initially opposed allowing observers into the West Bank and Gaza, on the basis that Israel is a democracy and its commitment to allowing democratic elections should be beyond question. The PLO argued that only the presence of international observers would reassure Palestinians that Israel was not interfering with elections.

European Union spokesman Ian Blackley said Lidbom met with officials of the Central Election Commission on Monday night, but he said commission head Mahmoud Abbas did not attend.

Former commission head Saeb Erekat—now a candidate for the council—said he agrees with the observers that the campaign should start immediately. "In this, they have a point," he said. "I urged the president (Arafat) to announce that the election campaign should start immediately."

Not that most candidates aren't already campaigning. For weeks, many of the 700 declared candidates have been holding gatherings in the homes of their families and friends and placing ads in the newspapers, despite admonishments from the election commission that their activities were illegal.

Last September, Israel and the PLO agreed that the council

Continued on page 2

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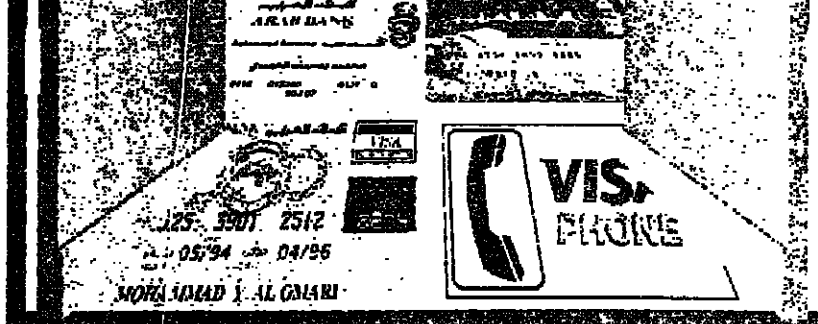
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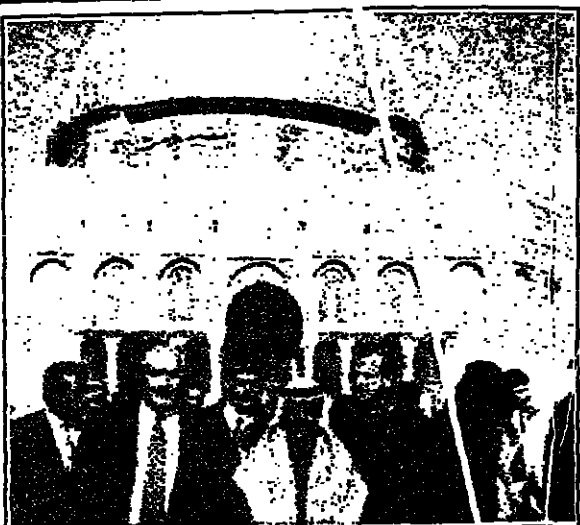
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JORDAN WEEK

An unconventional report on Jordanian news
and views edited by Awni Abu Ghosh



Qatari delegation visits PNA

A Qatari delegation concluded a three-day visit to the PNA areas on 30 December '95. Headed by Sheikh Mohamed Ben Eid Al Thani, chairman of the general committee of youth and sports, the delegation met with Chairman Arafat, and laid down the cornerstone of a \$25 million sports stadium in Gaza, to be funded by Qatar. The delegation visited the Orient House in Jerusalem and Hebron. Ben Eid Al Thani expressed his deep appreciation of Palestinian hospitality and commended the strong ties of cooperation and friendship between Qatar and Palestine.

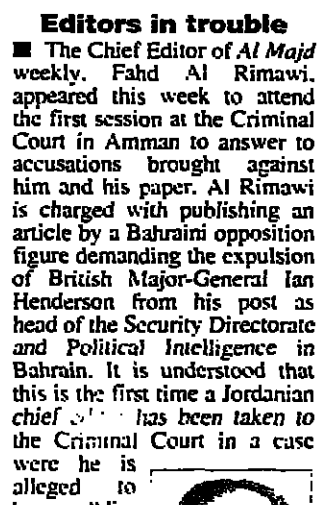
What? Cheating in Tawjihi?

Twelve students were caught cheating during the Tawjihi exams last week. The cases are being looked into by the Ministry of Education. While some could have their papers cancelled and be expelled from the exams, others could get off lightly, with only a warning. What is disgraceful is that four other students have been caught falsifying their identities. It is understood that they are being taken to court. Furthermore, students complained that the Arabic and math exams were too hard and too long for the time allocated. A number of academic experts upheld the grievances put by the students. One said that the math exam was far too difficult for Tawjihi standard.

TCC: no answer on the Iraqi side

The Telecommunication Corp. (TCC), has finally come clean and said it has nothing to do with the stoppage of telephone services between Jordan and Iraq. Telephone lines between the two countries have been cut off for the past two weeks. When people started to complain, the General Director of the TCC, Mr. Walid Al Duweik, had to make a statement, pointing out that his corporation was not the culprit. This means that the cut-off originated from Iraq. The timing of the cut-off coincided with recent talk about Jordan's intention to host an Iraqi opposition conference. Naturally the Iraqi leadership is not happy about such intentions. This leaves a lot to be speculated about. In a way, one could say that Jordanian-Iraqi relations are currently on hold.

Editors in trouble
The Chief Editor of Al Majd weekly, Fahd Al Rimawi, appeared this week to attend the first session at the Criminal Court in Amman to answer to accusations brought against him and his paper. Al Rimawi is charged with publishing an article by a Bahraini opposition figure demanding the expulsion of British Major-General Ian Henderson from his post as head of the Security Directorate and Political Intelligence in Bahrain. It is understood that this is the first time a Jordanian chief of a newspaper has been taken to the Criminal Court in a case where he is alleged to have "disturbed" relations between Jordan and a friendly country. Relations between the two countries are better than ever with the visit of HRH Prince Hassan to Bahrain recently. However, Mr. Al Rimawi seems to be in the best possible hands for he has a team of lawyers headed by Dr. Hani Al Khasawneh. His next session in court is on 15 January. Meanwhile, the Chief Editor of the weekly Al Urdun, Dr. Musa Al Kilani, was released on bail after he was charged with lack of objectivity in reporting and commenting on news; harming national unity and libelling national institutions. His paper had alleged that assistance extended by the Government to the people of Aqaba in the aftermath of last month's tremor ended up in Juhai Amman groceries or in the hands of Aqaba Governorate and Aqaba Regional Authority (ARA) employees. When the general prosecutor demanded to know the names and locations of these employees and shops so he could pursue them legally, Dr. Kilani was quoted as denying that he knew them.



Al Rimawi

been licensed, is more than willing to take its chances in today's political void. Headed by Mohammad Faisal Al Majali, Al Ansar has 85 founding members. Mr. Majali believes his party has got what it takes to build a broad based party. Refusing to be labelled as a middle of the road party, Mr. Majali said most of Al Ansar's members belong to the working class and the objective is to serve the citizen and the nation, he told the weekly Al Bilad. But isn't this the objective of every single party, most of which have ended up on the mantle piece? Please Ansar, put your act together and show us your program. Meanwhile, a new party is expected to pitch in for a license from the Ministry of Interior shortly—that is if it ever manages to scrape together its 50 founding members that are needed to be granted a license. The Irbid-based Al Salam (peace) Party is still looking for members.... Any takers?

Closing in on imams

Police arrested Mahmud Ibrahim, the mu'athin (caller to prayer) of the Imam Al Mosque in Russeifeh, Islamic Action Front deputy Mohammad Al Hajj announced. Ibrahim's arrest followed a short speech he gave after the Friday prayer last week. It is not known where he is being held, but in a memorandum sent to the Prime Minister, Al Hajj demanded Ibrahim's immediate release. Meanwhile, police arrested 75-year-old Mr. Abdo Fayyad Al Azzayda, another mu'athin in one of the Madaba mosques. Former deputy Mohammad Al Azzayda said the security forces had no business in arresting Al Azzayda since his call for prayer was made in a private mosque and not one run by the Ministry of Awqaf. The man in robes was still in custody, according to Al Bilad. The Azzayda tribe in Madaba was quoted by the paper as saying that the imprisonment of one of its members in no way serves the nation and is a direct harassment of the tribe because of its Islamic orientation.

New women congress: RUND objects

Many people continue to express satisfaction at the deliberations and achievements of the country's broad, powerful, and unified delegation to the 4th World Women Congress, which was held in Beijing last September. The successful participation of Jordanian women was made possible through the work of

the Jordanian National Committee of Women (JNCW). But the recent setting up of the National Jordanian Congress of Women Committees was received with mixed feelings. Critics say the creation of the congress was not preceded by the disbanding of the JNCW which represents over 50 women's organizations operating around the country. The Jordanian Democratic Women's League (RUND) criticized the creation of the congress and described it as an official Government run women's federation. RUND issued a statement saying the Congress was not formed at the behest of the 15,000 strong woman general assembly of the women committees of Jordan and that it constitutes a blatant interference by the Government in the affairs of Jordanian women.

Shakel in circulation

According to Al Bilad weekly, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) circulated a few days ago a letter among Jordanian banks advising them to accept capital transfer in the Israeli's Shakel. It added that the CBJ also notified these banks to consider the Israeli Shekel an acceptable currency in the Jordanian exchange market.

Al Bilad quoted CBJ sources as saying that the Central Bank of Israel is expected to issue an

identical notice to Israeli banks stipulating that the Jordanian dinar become, in return, an accepted currency of transfer in those banks. Al Bilad noted that such a measure had come in the wake of the Palestinian Monetary Authority's (PMA) assumption of its duties to supervise commercial bank activities in the West Bank. However, Ad Dustour daily said that though the Association of Money Exchangers (AME) has no

objection to dealing with the Shakel, so far nobody has offered Shakel to the exchangers. It added that Shakel is circulated in Aqaba only, and in five exchange offices there at IS 2000 per week, and at JD 0.215 per IS 1. Exchangers pointed out that the non-transactions in the Israeli Shekel are blamed on Israeli tourists who do not usually carry Shakes on them when visiting Jordan.

Poverty on the increase, study finds

Forty five percent of Jordanians live below the poverty line. These latest statistics come from a study conducted by the International Committee of Population Development and published in the UAE-based Al Khalef. The average monthly income for poor families in Jordan is about JD150. The study was carried out as a direct result of the increase in the price of foodstuffs, especially meat, vegetables and dairy products. It found that the entire average salary of the Jordanian family goes towards meeting the high cost of living. This means that the individual share of the salary of these families is no more than JD10 a month. The study said that the main reason for the increase of poverty was unemployment and the lack of opportunities for tens of thousands of under-graduates whose numbers are on the increase every year. The study said that the unemployment situation has been worsened by the fact that there is more than 250,000 migrant workers in the country. It warned that an increase in poverty could lead to increasing social problems.



Jahid Rifaidh Dastour

Committee to defend Shbeilat formed

A new popular Committee for the Defence of Leith Shbeilat was formed last week. The 34-member committee includes doctors, lawyers, engineers, human rights activists and politicians.

Lower House deputy Tojan Faisal is on the list as are other well known names like Bahjat Abu Gharbeh and the Islamist columnist Ziyad Abu Ghaniyeh. It is not yet certain how the committee will pursue its course of action, but it could well prove a formidable force once the Shbeilat case starts in the State Security Court. Meanwhile, the popular committee organized a visit to Shbeilat at Juweideh's Correctional Facility.



Vice-President of the Engineers Association Mr Azam Al Huneidi.

Eye witnesses confirmed that there were a number of buses carrying visitors from as far as Tafleeh, Shbeilat's hometown. According to Al Hadath, some were turned away.

Among the visitors were deputies Khalil Hadadin and Hamam Said, Tayser Al Zibri, the former general secretary of Hashd, Ziyad Abu Ghaniyeh and the

Barak says Jordan, Israel will sign accords

Continued from page 1

the King stressed that Jordan was ready to help Iraqis start a dialogue to help them save their country. In their joint press conference, Mr. Kabarti and Mr. Barak praised the agreements that Jordan and Israel will sign. Mr. Kabarti said the agreements could be a model for other to follow. Mr. Kabarti said Jordan and Israel were close to agreement over the fate of 40 Jordanian prisoners in Israel. Mr. Kabarti said a formula was being discussed under which most of the prisoners will be released.

Mr. Barak was hopeful about progress on the Syrian-Israeli track, but he cautioned that it was too early to make judgments about their outcome. He said Syria can suppress Hizbullah if it wanted, referring to recent waves of attacks by the Shiite group against northern Israel. He also noted that last month Eilat Dayan, the Israeli deputy foreign minister, paid a visit to Jordan, met Foreign Minister Kabarti, discussed bilateral relations and the peace process, and talked about the 40 Jordanian prisoners in Israeli jails, as well as the Jordanian passports which Israel continues to hold from some residents of Jerusalem who obtained Israeli citizenship. Al Mashreq recalled that sometime earlier Jordan's ambassador to Israel Dr. Marwan Al Muasher had said the first group of these prisoners would be released at the beginning of January '96.

Centrists to unite

Continued from page 1

form of the new party? Will it be an umbrella for the eight parties? or will the parties dissolve and integrate into one? How far do businessmen affect the project? One big question: Will it take the opposite stand to the anti-peace parties, especially the Islamic Action Front?

In addition to Dr. Al Majali's draft papers, two others were presented to higher committees which were headed by Dr. Majali and the secretary generals of the parties: the first was presented by the National Front, which is a coalition of four parties. The second was presented by Al Ahd party, the major centrist party which leads the National Action Front of 17 deputies in the Lower House holding five ministerial posts in the cabinet. Al Ahd is led by Mr. Abdel Hadi Al Majali, a brother of the former prime minister.

Also it is expected that Al Wa'd party will present a new draft. "All the papers are complementary. All parties believe in dialogue to reach a unified platform," said Mr. Talal Al Ramahi, the secretary general of Al Wahdawayoon. He added that the committee will meet next Tuesday to discuss the papers and to find a common agenda. "We are looking for a real constructive opposition that can build a concrete popular background based on a majority in Parliament which will support it towards forming a Government," Al Omari said.

Al Yaqadha, led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Abdel Ra'ouf Al Rawabdeh, believes first of all in uniting parties under one front which will integrate into one party at a later stage. "This format requires serious work which will lead to one strong party which can then lead the masses," said Abdussalam Ghazawi, deputy secretary general of the party. "Since the majority in the country are moderates and centrists, if the national centrist trend unites its forces and lives up to the responsibility, it will affect and influence the country."

Post it!

Like everything else the cost of posting a letter has increased. The Ministry of Communications and Post has said the price increase which would apply to every type of post both inside and outside the country, would take effect immediately. For a 10 gram weight item the price would be 15 piasters for local mail, 20 piasters to the Arab world, 32 piasters to Europe and 40 piasters to the USA. The increases would also apply to parcels although the ministry didn't say by how much. The increase will also apply to telephone rates, but there was no immediate conformation of this.

One more for the road

Just when one thought political parties were going under, a new comer brings life to the scene. Al Ansar (supporters), a new political party that has just

Observers criticize Palestinians' handling of campaign

Continued from page 1

would have 82 members. Arafat subsequently added a seat for the Samaritan community that lives in Nablus. Last week, he expanded the council again, this time to 88 members, and reopened candidate registration in the districts where he added seats. Arafat then issued a decree saying that the campaign will begin Jan. 5, rather than Dec. 30.

After Arafat reopened candidate registration, four men closely identified with the militant Hamas Islamic movement in Gaza announced they will compete in the elections despite the movement's decision against fielding candidates. But they later withdrew their candidacy after Hamas criticized them. Arafat had tried for months to persuade Hamas, the most organized opposition to his own Fatah faction, to participate in the elections.

Arafat complained that Hamas should not be making decisions on the length of the campaign, the deadline for candidate registration or the number of seats on the council. Instead, he said, those decisions should have been made by the Central Election Commission.

"We wanted to put down a strong marker and say that these endless confusing changes must stop," Blackley said.

Lidbom charged that the election commission, established by Arafat to oversee procedure, and announced just before the end of the year, was formed too late. He also said ARAAS, also known as Abu Muzan, has refused to

see him. The observers are not the only ones complaining. Reporters Without Borders, an independent organization that monitors freedom of the press, criticized the Palestinian Authority for a lack of balance in the access public television and radio gave opposition parties and candidates.

"A very strong imbalance is found in the access to Palestinian public radio and TV between different candidates and parties," the group said in a statement issued after it surveyed the authority-run television and radio stations for 10 days in December.

"Fatah was the only party to have had real TV coverage," the group said. Radio did better, it said, providing access to 20 candidates. And Palestinian newspapers were found to grant more access to the leftist opposition parties than to Fatah.

Still, much of the access in newspapers was in the form of advertising space for opposition candidates, said Reporters Without Borders.

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Deputies debate budget, highlight issues of poverty, price hikes

Continued from page 1

tion of subsidized commodities by securing the receipt of subsidies by those who deserve them.

The Lower House Financial Committee has supported the Government's policy of resorting to internal borrowing for the third successive year. The committee has also appraised the Government's continuous effort at the reduction of the volume and burden of the

country's external debts (which fell from 190 percent of the GNP in 1990 to 91 percent of the GNP in 1995). The committee required the Government to intensify its contacts with creditors and institutions with a view to reducing these loans, writing them off, or transforming them into grants, aid, or soft loans so that foreign debt would not exceed 75 per cent in relation to the country's GNP.

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Media semi to be held Yamen

Some 100 journalists and media representatives are expected to attend a five-day seminar on the situation of the media in the Arab world, organized by the Arab League and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The seminar, which will be held in Yamen, aims to discuss the role of the media in the Arab world and to provide a platform for the exchange of views and experiences. The seminar will be held from January 10 to 14, 1996, in the city of Sana'a. The participants will include journalists, media executives, and scholars from various Arab countries. The seminar will be organized by the Arab League and UNESCO, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The seminar will be held in a hotel in Sana'a, and will include a series of workshops, seminars, and discussions. The participants will be provided with accommodation and meals during the seminar. The seminar is expected to be a valuable opportunity for the participants to share their experiences and to discuss the challenges facing the media in the Arab world.

People & Politics

1996 political predictions

In spite of the ongoing coffee boycott, Jordanian politicians, the Government included, are still eager to know their fortune in the new year. Some like to have their coffee cups studied by salon experts, others prefer a deck of cards or palm reading. But in the end everyone is tempted to have his or her fortune told. This column has decided to begin this year with its own fortune predictions.

The Government: High expectations now that the budget is about to be passed. A reshuffle? May be; a complete overhaul? The public wants it, but it might not be forthcoming. So a reshuffle is most likely. It makes everybody happy—a changing of the guard for the deputies; a new hope for the public and press columnists. But nothing changes in reality.

The deputies: Nothing else to do now that the Government has passed most of the important bills with little resistance. A reshuffle might heat the atmosphere and give some deputies renewed hope of joining the ranks of the most wanted job in officialdom. Public service? No, some cheeky ones might say self service. With the countdown to the Parliamentary elections starting already, few hope to see the inside of the dome for another four years.

The press: Bad year ahead. It has the impossible job of making everybody happy under our unique democratic system. Far shot. Now the press is supposed to create its own code of ethics. None will be happy. In fact we can expect more divisions within the press body—since the so-called trouble-makers are unlikely to be all association members. Some fringe papers will die of natural/market causes, but Government harassment of its editors might give them a new lease on life. Some editors miss the pre-democracy era already.

The professional associations: Tough nut to crack. So far they have the upper hand. But confrontation is on the way. The case of Laith Shbeilat has inflamed the national mood. Wait until he runs for reelection while his trial is held—and wins! The problem is that the whole affair is getting personal—and nasty. There will be more confrontation over normalization—an issue unlikely to be dropped by the Government.

Political parties: No more headaches for the Government from this front. Centrist parties are grouping and it appears Dr Abdel Salam Majali's crusade will succeed. The IAF has lost its appeal and lacks charismatic leadership. Other opposition parties are looking for a national base. Tribalism will continue to dominate party politics and that trend will continue.

Foreign relations: The upward trend will continue in Jordan's favor. But foreign assistance is drying up. Relations with Europe and Japan will prove especially beneficial. The feeling that we are getting only lip service from the US will continue to nag.

Relations with the PNA: The carousel phenomenon will continue; up and down; round and round, until we are all left dazed and disoriented. It is still a long way for confederation, never mind how Jordanians feel about it, does any one seriously believe the Palestinians want it?

Telecommunications: A good year indeed. Government doing well in this regard, especially as it liberalizes this sector. The trick is to deliver basic service to urban centers—never mind introducing e-mail and internet connections.

Royal Jordanian: Indeed it's the year of challenges for the national carrier. But the real challenge will be to upgrade ground service, not planes. People's confidence needs to be restored. How about a smaller but more efficient airline?

People's pockets: A rising cost of living will be the mark of 1996. But the Government is unabashed and will continue to hike prices of basic services: water, electricity, post, transportation... It will be playing with fire, especially if it decides to raise the price of bread and gasoline.

Legislative and tax reforms: People will love to hate them. Selective and painful. The Government is caught between a rock and a hard place. But ministers and deputies are imaginative enough to sugar-coat most measures. We will be cured of the cold only to end up with high blood pressure.

Tourism: Everybody is dressed up for the party, but the guests are late arriving. We hate to say it, but we told you so. The Aqaba tremors didn't help either. It will take more than goodwill to attract mass tourism. How about serious planning, promotion and training? Services are still lagging behind. Credibility is also a rare commodity.

Unemployment, poverty, corruption and red-tape: Why should 1996 be any different from previous years? Government hopes to bring down unemployment by one percent—ignoring that thousands more will be joining the ranks of the unemployed this year—while streamlining its social services to help those who are unable to help themselves. More seminars on corruption should be held—no one is harmed that way. As for red-tape and bureaucracy, well, dealing with them will be like shooting a charging elephant with a water pistol; or else the hunter becomes the hunted.

Media seminar to be held in Yamen

NEW YORK—Some 100 journalists, media managers and policy-makers in information from the Arab world will participate in a five-day seminar to support an independent and pluralistic media in the region, to take place in Yamen, beginning on Saturday, 7 January.

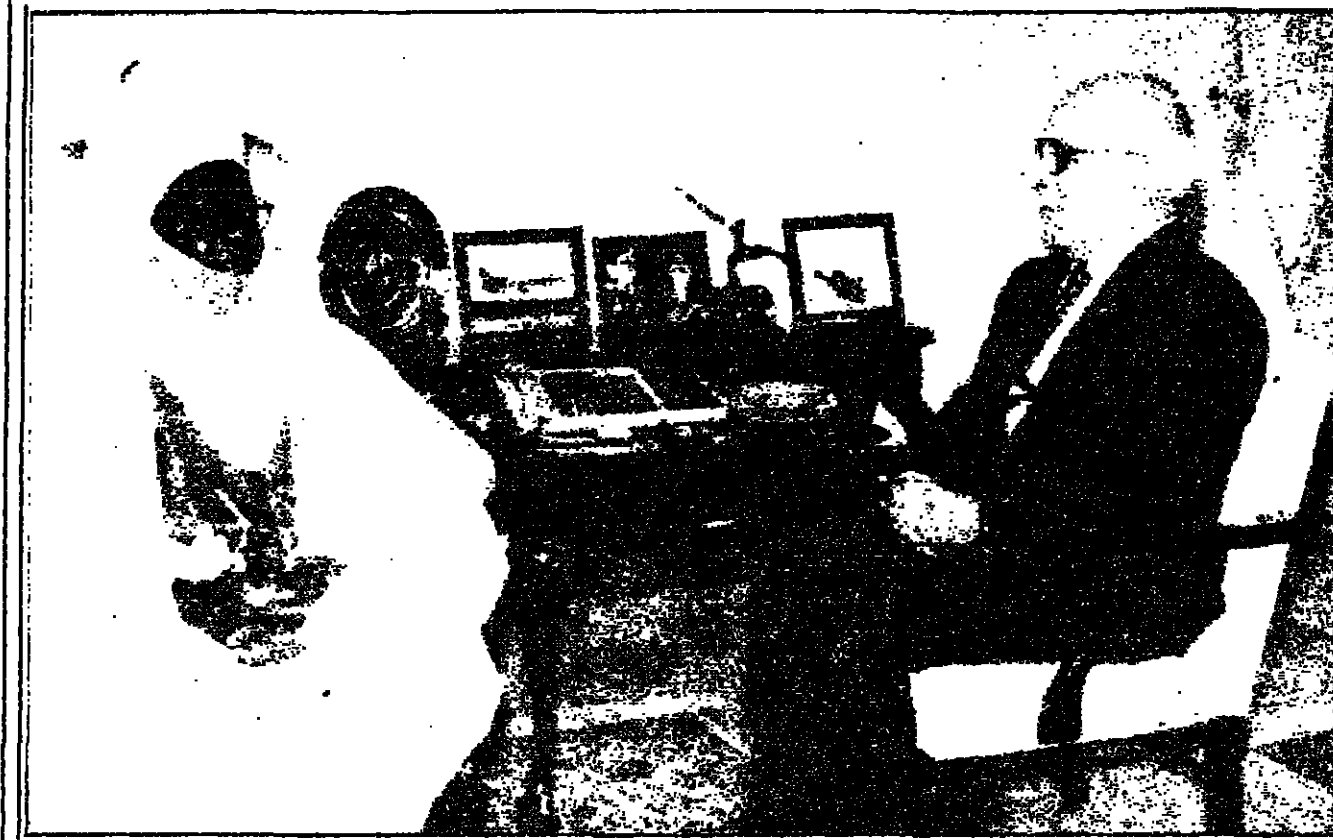
The "Seminar on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Arab Media" will evaluate the needs and concerns of media professionals in the region and allow the participants an opportunity to reflect collectively on the principles of freedom of information and of expression and the flow of ideas by word and image in the context of Arab society.

The following major themes have been identified for the seminar: The situation of the media in the Arab world; the role of independence and pluralism; Legal, cultural and political framework for free and pluralistic media; the role of censorship and self-censorship; Public service media and training of media professionals. Plenary sessions will deliberate on the themes of the seminar while working groups will discuss the issues of strengthening professional organizations as well as training.

The seminar will conclude by identifying areas, in the Arab region, media landscape, where priority assistance should be provided and by preparing specific project proposals to this end. A final report, summarizing the proceedings of the seminar including recommendations of working groups, will be adopted by the participants in the seminar.

The seminar is being organized jointly by the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in collaboration with the government of Yamen, with funding assistance from the Danish government, the European Commission, the Danish International Development Agency, the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. Three previous regional seminars were held in Windhoek, Namibia (1991), Almaty, Kazakhstan (1992), and Santiago, Chile (1994).

The seminar will also be open to observers from member states of the United Nations system, regional intergovernmental organizations, agencies and programs of the United Nations, international and regional media organizations, communication research institutions, national cooperation agencies and foundations.



● His Majesty King Hussein receives Nigerian envoy, Omar Sanda Tadico, at the Royal Court, Sunday. Mr Tadico delivered a message to King Hussein from the Nigerian President Sani Abacha appreciating the efforts of Jordan in the peace process. The meeting was attended by the Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qassem.

Embezzlement on the rise, says 1994 comptroller report

By Hamdan Al Hajj
Special to The Star

THE 1994 report of the Comptroller Office shows that issues of embezzlement of public funds increased during that year to a level higher than all previous years. The report registered 111 cases in 1994 with an embezzled amount of JD 797,945 and \$337,773.

The report, which was passed to the Lower House of Parliament for discussion by the Chairman of the Comptroller Office Dr Abed Kharabshah, called for the urgent investigation of the causes of these embezzlements, methods of treatment, and ways to reach an end to their recurrence.

In a bid towards improved financial management, the report calls for an urgent look into the condition of the Cooperative Society, and the Cooperative Bank. It also calls on

Royal Jordanian to put its house in order, by a reorganization of its structure and a collection of its due loans.

The report confirms that certain officials have imposed employment appointments in contravention with effective rules, principles, and administrative systems. While urging treatment, the report demands that the Central and Inspection Bureau, and the Civil Service Office practice their powers in this regard.

The report notes violations in the financial and supplies systems, the Law of Development of Towns and Rural Areas, public funds collection, and work regulations.

The report further urges



Kharabshah

adherence to effective laws, applied rules, instructions, and

regulations on the part of all ministries, departments, public institutions, and municipal and village councils to reduce infringements on public funds.

It also calls for the consolidation of an institutional system in the public sector by the development of administrative principles.

Such measures will enable a better assessment performance follow-up, and develop effective modern means of improving collection mechanisms. This would be through the establishment of financial incentives for taxpayers who observe the deadline of repayment, and the issuance of instructions in

regard to repaying due amounts from previous years in installment.

Freed Al Quds editor says Palestinian society is not yet practicing democracy

AMMAN (Star)—On Saturday, 30 December '95, Maher Al Alami was taken by the Palestinian Preventive Security agents from his confinement in Jericho to Ramallah to meet PNA Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Alami explained to the Palestinian leader the implications of not having Arafat's Christmas story on the paper's front page, according to *The Jerusalem Post*. Arafat ordered Alami released after that short meeting. However, Arafat's comment was really surprising as he told the editor that "he should have put the story where he had been told."

This clearly indicates a violation of press freedom, and a dictate that contravenes the basic principles of democracy. It also reminds us of the former days of the hegemony of power and influence with a total disregard of political pluralism and openness. A prove of that is evident in 'the fact' the *Post* said, "no Palestinian paper, including *Al Quds*, mentioned Alami's arrest." It added that this "shows the fear many Palestinian journalists have of angering Arafat." Alami himself said he "never expected such a reaction" for not running the story where Arafat wanted. Alami added, "I am very sorry for this entire affair. Democracy is not something you just talk about, it is also something you must practice. Palestinian society is not yet practicing democracy."

Doug Struck of the LA Times-Washington Post News Service provides a detailed background to the story. When editor Maher Al Alami ran a flattering story about Yasser Arafat on page 8 of his East Jerusalem Arabic newspaper, he was summoned by Palestinian undercover police. They wanted to know why the story was not on page 1.

His explanation apparently was not convincing: six days later, Alami is still being held in confinement in Jericho.

"He is in my 'hotel,'" Jabril Rajoub, the head of the Pales-

tinian Preventive Security Service in Jericho, said last Friday. He added, laughing, "I am brainwashing him."

Human rights groups say the arrest is no laughing matter. "They see it as disregard for freedom of the press and an ominous sign for democracy under Arafat's Palestinian Authority, just as the Palestinians enter their first election campaign for a permanent self-rule body."

"Any action like this has very negative repercussions, externally and internally," said Hanan Ashrawi, once a spokesman for the PLO.

Arafat really doesn't want a free press," said D'Jallal Malti, a representative of the organization in Paris. "They want a press under control, just like in any other Arab country like Syria or Iraq."

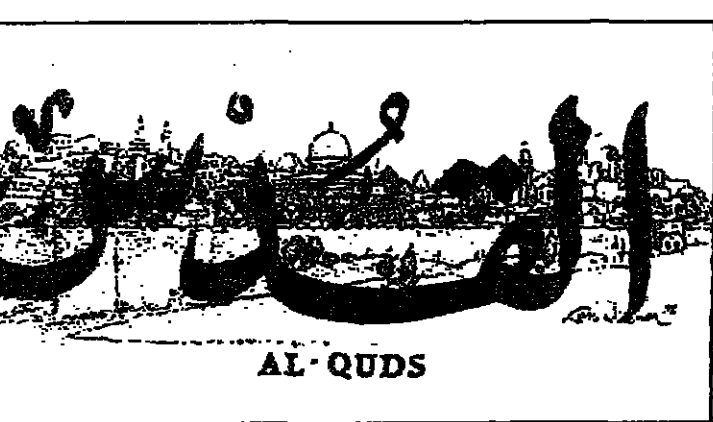
Alami, 50, already had a large photograph and three sto-

man for the Palestinians and now a candidate for the Palestinian Council.

"It shouldn't have happened," she said. "It's a very clear violation of freedom of the press, an attempt at intimidation, and an illegal act."

Reporters Without Frontiers, which recently arrived here to monitor the Palestinian election 20 January, joined in protest at Alami's confinement.

"Coming as it does during the election, this shows how



His arrest is one of a succession of heavy-handed attempts to stifle free discourse since Arafat's Palestinian National Authority began operation in the Gaza Strip 19 months ago.

ries about Arafat on that day's front page, but that apparently was not enough.

His arrest is one of a succession of heavy-handed attempts to stifle free discourse since Arafat's Palestinian National Authority began operation in the Gaza Strip 19 months ago.

Palestinian security police have jailed Arab reporters for critical reporting, temporarily closed newspapers, ordered a ban on certain stories, threatened editors and jailed Palestin-

Point of order

By Raed Al Abed

Drug prices on the spot again

■ The bombshell dropped by former Minister of Health, Dr Abdel Rahim Malhas, about the high prices and rotten food and drugs that is sold to the public, continues to reverberate long after the crisis that continues to be engineered by some merchants.

These statements of Malhas made under the dome of the nation, shocked the public, despite the fact that the case immediately whitewashed.

But the drug masters are up to their old tricks again. In addition to food price increases, people continue to suffer from rising prices of one of life's basic necessities: drugs. Its prices have skyrocketed despite the fact that the Health Ministry imposed price control.

The profit margin of pharmacies ranged from 400% to 1800% of a number of locally produced drugs. To get these exorbitant increases pharmacies sell these drugs by tablets, say Lower House Deputy Dr Nazieh Ammarin in last week's parliamentary session. They include:

TFANIL Anti-asthma: at 116 fils, the real price 12 fils, a 400% profit

CEMIDIN Anti-ulcer: at 170 fils, the real price 32 fils, a 550% profit

RANIDIN Anti-ulcer: a 1000% profit

FAMODAR Anti-ulcer: at 990 fils, the real price 55 fils a 1800% profit

INSULIN Anti-diabetes at JD 12, the real price is JD 3.5. The Health Ministry already demanded pharmaceutical factories and agencies to bring down their prices of INSULIN, as it serves a high number of diabetics, but the Ministry was ignored.

Prices of and profits from drugs are listed by the Ministry: 15% for storage, 20% for pharmacies, 4% for transportation, 6% for expenses. These amount to a total of 45%, which is then added to the cost of the drug.

No free calls, what's left to offer!?

■ The Telecommunications Corp might cancel the 1000 free phone calls service at the end of this month.

This would be unjust, because we already pay for every single step of the process, from subscription to repairs, and the final bill.

We pay and pay and pay. There is the line-connection fee for JD 150, and an annual subscription fee of JD 30. And that is just for starters. The bill comes next draining people's pockets. This is not to mention the different prices for calls which depend on the mood of the computer. Computer mistakes of extra calls add to the misery, since it takes months to be reimbursed.

One item talked about pay for "service"! What kind of service is the TCC talking about?

Even if the TCC disconnected a telephone line, owners have to pay five dinars to reconnect it. No free calls ends the only service of the TCC.

The highway of death, who is responsible?

■ The highway of death, is not a Jordanian movie imitating an American horror one, but it is a true life story of tragedy in Jordan. The place is the Amman-Zarqa highway, which was built in 1979.

During the past three years, 44 people were killed in traffic accidents. Double that number were lucky, and got away with serious injuries or life disabilities. Hit and run is the style of most accidents, as most cases testify to.

Populated areas, housing, factories and schools are situated along side of the highway. The estimated 20-kilometer long road lacks acceptable safety codes. It has only one overpass. Among the crazy storms of high speed vehicles, people are indeed risking their lives by crossing the highway.

Last Saturday, an old lady and her granddaughter instantly died after a car ran over them. The Government should take real measures to stop this on-going massacre.

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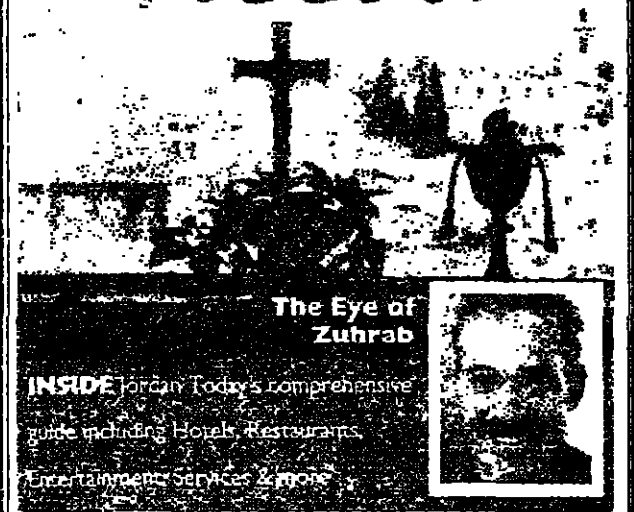
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Japan's bankers are betting on a prosperous future

Interpreting the Basic Law

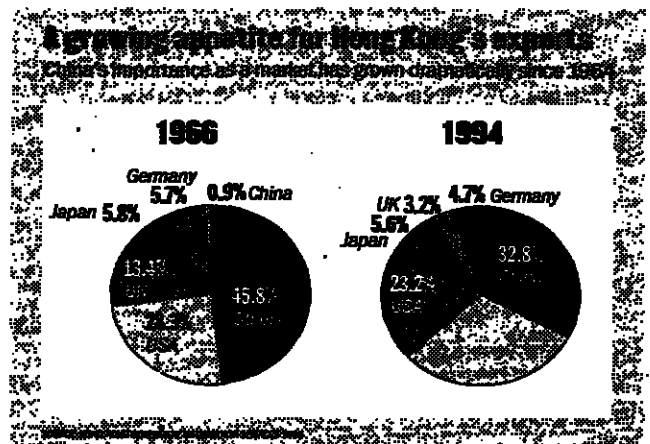
By Mutsuho Kawashima

LESS THAN TWO YEARS remain before sovereignty over Hong Kong reverts to China, and the uncertainty surrounding this historic shift is casting a cloud over the British colony. But Japanese banks remain optimistic. They continue to open new branch and representative offices. Indeed, despite rising wages and office rents, Hong Kong now hosts more Japanese bank offices than New York, the long-time leader. Japanese banks clearly see Hong Kong as the financial center of Asia.

The basic cause of Japanese economic optimism toward Hong Kong is the mutual interest of China and the colony. Prosperity in Hong Kong means prosperity for China. As things stand now, Hong Kong's Basic Law stipulates that the colony will be given a high degree of autonomy, and that capitalism will be allowed to continue, for at least the next 50 years. Freedom of speech is included in the Basic Law. Japanese leaders believe Beijing will not fiddle with the Basic Law since this might severely damage the image of Hong Kong, and thus boomerang on China itself.

Economically, Hong Kong and Chi-

na have become increasingly integrated in recent years. In 1993, China received 32.3 percent of all Hong Kong's exports, and supplied 37.5 percent of the colony's imports, according to the Industrial Bank of Japan. Many Hong Kong companies have relocated to the southern regions of China, especially Guangdong, and now import products made there. The vibrant trade has con-



tributed to the rapid growth of both areas. For example, Hong Kong now receives almost 85 percent of all Guangdong exports and supplies 74 percent of the areas imports.

From the other side, Chinese companies continue to pour money into Hong Kong, especially in real estate,

infrastructure, and communications businesses. Total Chinese investment in Hong Kong exceeds US\$10 billion. Officially, over 1,000 Chinese companies operate in Hong Kong. The unofficial estimate is 3,000.

To a large extent, firms from both Hong Kong and China now prefer to work with each other rather than with Japanese firms that are hobbled by poor economic conditions at home.

The big question for Japanese government and business leaders is how China will treat Hong Kong politically. Japanese leaders are worried that the Basic Law provides Beijing with ample opportunity to exercise tight political control of Hong Kong. It allows Beijing to quell any rebellion or any efforts to split the colony from China, and many types of legitimate dissent could be curbed under the guise of preventing "rebellion."

Already there are pressures on the media. In March 1994, a reporter for a neutral Hong Kong newspaper was ar-

rested after properly reporting that the Chinese central bank had plans to sell some gold. He was found guilty of stealing highly secret government information and was sentenced to 12 years in prison.

Leading Hong Kong businessmen are deeply concerned that uncertainty surrounding the reversion of sovereignty to China will steer foreign companies away from the territory. Sluggish individual spending has already slowed an economy that boomed in recent years. Last September's general election, which saw the colony's pro-democratic camp trounce the pro-Beijing forces, did little to boost consumer confidence.

Many Japanese analysts believe that hawks within the Beijing leadership would like to tame the independent spirit of Hong Kong and fully integrate the colony into Communist China. Should this occur, they fear, Beijing might be tempted to strong-arm Taiwan into reunification. Such reckless behavior could easily undercut the stable political conditions in Asia that have allowed the region to prosper economically. ☐

MUTSUHO KAWASHIMA IS THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS EDITOR FOR *The Weekly Toyo Keizai* in Tokyo.

An iron fist: China's military history, 1950-95

WHEN THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA says it is willing to go to war, it is not making idle threats. In the 45 years since its armies stormed across Yalu River and routed the US-led United Nations force in North Korea, China has clashed with the former Soviet Union, India, Taiwan, Vietnam, Tibet—and its own citizens.

This October, General Zhang Wannian said publicly that China will use military force if Taiwan declares independence. Reunification with Taiwan, which remained in nationalist hands after the communist victory in 1949, is the biggest of a number of outstanding territorial issues that China's leaders would like to resolve in their country's favor. These include claims to large areas of Russia and numerous islands in the China Sea; the latter could bring China into conflict with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Should they choose force to pursue these claims, China's leaders have at their disposal over 3.2 million men and women under arms, an estimated 8,000 main battle tanks, over 4,000 fighter aircraft and a growing naval presence.

- 1950 ▶ After repeated warnings, China sends its troops into North Korea, saying that country from utter defeat by the United Nations troops that had responded to North Korea's earlier invasion of South Korea
- ▶ Chinese troops occupy Tibet, effectively ending 39 years of independence
- 1953 ▶ A ceasefire is signed, ending the Korean War. An estimated 350,000 Chinese soldiers died in the conflict
- 1958 ▶ China begins an artillery bombardment of Matsu and Quemoy, two Taiwanese-controlled islands. The bombardment continues until 1960
- 1959 ▶ After a year of fighting between Tibetan guerrillas and Chinese troops, Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, flees to India
- 1962 ▶ Efforts by India to assert its claim over disputed borderlands are decisively repulsed by Chinese troops
- 1969 ▶ After ambushing a Russian patrol along the Ussuri River, China instigates a series of border skirmishes with the Soviet Union
- 1979 ▶ To punish Vietnam for ignoring China's wishes and occupying Cambodia, over 200,000 troops push across Vietnam's northern border. Vietnam's troops force China to withdraw after suffering heavy casualties in the course of a two-week campaign
- 1988 ▶ China sends troops to assert its claim on the Vietnamese-occupied Spratly Islands. Two months later, Chinese forces sink a Vietnamese gunboat
- 1989 ▶ Over 2,000 students are killed in Beijing's Tiananmen Square as troops and tanks crush a pro-democracy movement
- 1995 ▶ China conducts ballistic missile tests, hitting targets located within 90 miles of Taiwan's coast

COMPILED BY GAVIN BRUCE, WORLD PAPER STAFF

Hong Kong holds some of the keys to prosperity

After 1997, China will have its foot in Vietnam's economic door

By Pham Thanh

IF CHINA, HONG KONG and Taiwan can be seen as a single Chinese entity, then that entity represents an enormous economic potential that will surely get stronger when China is united with Hong Kong and, ultimately, with Taiwan.

Will that potential be realized? China, after all, is wrestling with the sweeping trends that are integrating the world's economy.

Recovering Hong Kong will certainly present China with a major opportunity to integrate step-by-step with the new world economy. Hong Kong's position as a major commercial port, marine transportation hub and financial center will give China an advantageous commercial position with which to execute its stated policy of "vigor-

ously reaching out into the Pacific". Stronger relations with big nations and greater influence on small ones can also be expected.

With Hong Kong under its authority, China has a springboard from which to launch its strategic drive to modernize. Dr John Naisbitt has predicted that Asia—with China as its focal point—will become the world's focal point in the 21st century. Japan, he said during a recent visit to Indonesia, will surrender its position as

the region's largest economy to China early in the next century. If these predictions are correct, Hong Kong and its prosperity will be a key factor.

Li Ping, head of the Chinese government's Office of the Hong Kong-Quebec Department, recently affirmed that China will follow a "one nation, two systems" policy that will preserve Hong Kong's capitalist character. Chi-

na, he said, needs Hong Kong as a bridge to the global markets, while the world needs Hong Kong as an entry

point to China's expanding markets.

What does this mean for Vietnam? In the past relations between the two countries have had their ups and downs—including a major clash along Vietnam's northern border in 1979—but closer economic cooperation seems

likely in the future. Both nations are also going through similar changes, have stated their commitment to building socialism while modernizing, reforming and industrializing to meet the challenges posed by the global economy.

Although China has not become a major trading partner, Hong Kong is now the second largest investor in Vietnam after Taiwan. As of the end of 1994, Hong Kong had committed US\$1.9 billion to 210 different projects and ventures. Vietnamese officials expect that these commitments to Viet-

nam will be honored after 1997, and may even increase. The hope is that contact with Hong Kong will spur Chinese investors to increase their stake in other Asian economies. For Vietnam, which depends on primary products such as coal, timber, foodstuffs and chromium, this could mean additional capital for industries such as textiles and household utensils. ☐

PHAM THANH IS THE EDITOR OF *The Vietnam Courier*, A HANOI-BASED NEWSPAPER.

TING

Continued from page 3

certain degree. If this occurs, it will prove a bitter reversal of fortune. Hong Kong, as people may still remember, was a "beacon of freedom" in Cold War days, attracting millions of Chinese refugees from the mainland. It still is, perhaps, judging from the thousands of "boat people" who swarmed to the tiny enclave from Vietnam seeking a better life.

Ironically, after 50 years of living under capitalism, the residents in Hong Kong are suddenly facing a nightmare from which they had tried to escape. But now they are told not to panic. Deng has assured them that nothing in Hong Kong will change in the next 50 years under his famous "one country, two systems" formula.

Even so, after the conclusion of the 1984 Sino-British Agreement on the Future of Hong Kong, many of Hong Kong's elite professionals started an exodus for the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Many of them have returned in recent years after having acquired foreign passports which they called "insurance."

Taiwan is not so naive as to believe that democracy and communism can coexist for 50 years. In the short-run, however, its busy and close ties with Hong Kong may well continue to thrive after 1997 because of the economic benefits that will accrue to both Beijing and Taipei. ☐

DAVID TING IS AN EDITOR FOR THE *Hong Kong Standard*, AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER.


The Commerce Group of Companies is a leading financial conglomerate in Malaysia's rapidly growing financial system. At the helm is Commerce Asset-Holding Berhad (CAHB) listed in the financial section on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange (KLSE).

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- CIMB Securities Sdn Bhd: A member company of the KLSE dedicated to servicing the investment needs of its clients. The Group is affiliated to Japan's Sanwa Bank Limited.

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Business scene

A \$15 million loan agreement to help Jordan buy 70,000 tons of wheat from private US sources was signed in Amman last week. This soft loan is extended at the concessionary interest rate of 3% for the first seven years, and at 4% thereafter. Repayment will begin following a grace period of five years in sixteen annual installments.

The EC granted Jordan ECU 3.5 million to conduct feasibility studies for water storage and conveyance. The Community sees this as urgent as Jordan has now access to pumping 65 million cubic meters between 15 October-15 May each year, in addition to 28 million cubic meters every year between 15 May-15 October, from the King Abdullah Canal. The stored water will be used to irrigate about 25,000 hectares and supply the Amman Governorate.

The Labor Dept. in Aqaba received 268 applications, 248 of which were positively met in December. Another 126 labor contracts of foreign workers were renewed, and 30 work permits were cancelled. The inspection division of the department made 472 rounds in different enterprises, checked 65 companies for violations and reconciled 10 labor disputes during the same months.

The government has appropriated JD 1.75 million for the execution of the first stage of a water conveyer project to hotels in Wadi Mousa. The conveyer is 24.5 kilometers long, and would supply 150 cubic metres per hour. The second stage of the project will include the preparation of technical studies on the waste networks and a refinery station at a cost of \$10 million granted by USAID.

Eight new insurance companies have been approved by the Council of Ministers. Their total paid up capital is JD 18 million. They are: Al Daminoun Al Arab (JD 2 million), Jordan International Insurance (JD 4 million), Al Sagr Insurance (JD 3 million), Amman Insurance (JD 2 million), Islamic Insurance (JD 2 million), Arab-German Insurance (JD 5 million). This makes the number of insurance companies in Jordan to 23.

Germany has granted Jordan a DEM 30 million technical and financial loan for a 40-year period at a 0.75% interest rate, and a grace period of 10 years. The grant loan is directed to finance the second stage of the Greater Amman network project.

Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 3 JANUARY 1996

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
DM	1.0927	1.0982
FF	0.4925	0.4950
Yen	0.6130	0.6161
£	0.1441	0.1448
HK\$	0.6837	0.6871
SG\$	0.4399	0.4421
NT\$	0.0445	0.0447

Copyright laws need enforcement

By Mohammad Adawiya
Special to The Star

AS THE technological age sweeps across Jordan, one is hard pressed not to find computers, cellular phones and even compact disc players at every home, office and school. Jordan has indeed kept up with the rest of the world. Where the nation does lag behind, however, is in its handling of laws meant to protect the talented people who have helped to develop this invaluable technology. Jordan is running seriously behind in laws and enforcement of laws designed to reduce the illegal copying of intellectual property.

Perhaps the biggest area where Jordan and the region are trailing behind, is in copyright protection. This category, coming under Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), is perhaps the most abused of all the protection laws. What a patent is to an invention, and a trademark to a name, a copyright gives the legal exclusive right to an author or musician to publish, and sell his work. One visit to a music store, or a bookshop, however, will highlight just how insufficient regional laws and enforcement are. The casual manner and extend at which audio and video cassettes are illegally

copied makes one wonder if any laws exist at all.

According to Business Software Alliance for example, an industry watchdog, 90 percent of all software used in Saudi Arabia during 1994 was pirated, the highest level in Africa and the Middle East. While Saudi Arabia's 1989 Copyright Law does specify fines of slightly more than \$5,000 per violation, it is estimated that benefits to violators of the law totalled approximately \$101 million in 1994. Currently, the McDonald's and Volvo companies have cases pending in Saudi Arabian courts to protect their respective trademarks.

While many may think this is a subject of little importance to Jordan, others argue that its true importance is often underestimated. "Billions of dollars are lost worldwide from the abuse of copyright laws," says Mr. Ali Ahmad, President of Musicare International, a Los Angeles, California-based firm dealing in the administration of music catalogs. "The contents of a song or a book is like property...no one has the right to use those items without the owner's permission," Mr. Ahmad explains. "Jordan either lacks these laws or is simply not enforcing them," he continues.

Established in 1989, Musicare International represents musical artists in cases when producers or directors wish to use a particular client's work. During a recent visit to Amman, Mr. Ahmad noticed how inadequate some of Jordan's enforcement is. From frequent visits to the country in the past, the music administration firm's president explains that, "From what I can gather, Jordan has a history of poor deterrents in preventing copyright infringements."

Some argue it may be in the country's interest to simply continue its present practices. They argue that it isn't a matter of whether the laws are good, but whether Jordan can afford them. Citing the inevitable rise in the price of books and music cassettes, they advocate no change to the current policy. Mr. Ahmad, disagrees, explaining that the country will actually benefit more from the strict enforcement of these laws than one might expect. "The important thing is to give people the incentive to be creative," the company president explains. "...once people see that they will be rewarded for their ideas, the consumer will ultimately have a higher quality of items to choose from," he adds.

Jordan will also benefit from

increased foreign investment according to Mr. Ahmad. "Foreign companies are currently afraid of entering a market where their ideas are unprotected," he notes. Mr. Ahmad cites the case of The Disney Company which only recently entered the lucrative Gulf area due to the previously lack of intellectual property rights.

For some, the issue of intellectual property rights has been a lifelong struggle. One such individual is Mr. Talal Abu Ghazaleh, chairman of the Arab Society for the Protection of Intellectual Property (ASPIP), which held the First International Intellectual Property Conference in Amman in September, 1995. Mr. Abu Ghazaleh has led the fight for the establishment and enforcement of the protection of intellectual property such as trademarks and copyrights. His company, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh International (TAGI), continues this struggle with offices throughout the Middle East.

Mrs. Sana Badr Fahoum, Regional Manager, at TAGI explains that Jordan has had intellectual property right laws in place since 1952. The problems, she explains, is with the inadequacy of the penalties. "They can make more money by abusing these laws, even taking into account the pen-

alties," she explains. "...the penalties do not deter them." She explains, "We are in the process of overcoming these problems." She points out that Jordan has applied to become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and that as a member, Jordan would be obliged to obey the laws of intellectual property. In addition to increasing penalties against violators, Mrs. Fahoum believes that education is also important. "People don't realize the millions of dollars [involved] in buying an invention," she says. She believes that once people truly understand what intellectual property rights are, and penalties are substantially increased, Jordan will improve its record.

IPR's have taken center-stage as governments are realizing the importance of providing adequate protection of intellectual property. The countries of the region are just beginning to see how the lack of laws and enforcement can impede the inflow of foreign capital into the region and stifle creativity. While laws are in place, however, most agree that without strict enforcement, these laws will not achieve the desired results.

Euro-Med partnership relations set to improve after Barcelona

AMMAN (Star)—The 15 EU member states and 12 Mediterranean countries, which participated in the Barcelona Conference last November, committed themselves to establish a comprehensive partnership through strengthened political dialogue, the development of economic and financial cooperation, and greater emphasis on the social, cultural, and human dimensions. The declaration adopted at the conference emphasizes that "turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability, and prosperity requires a strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights, sustainable and balanced economic and social development, measures to combat poverty, and the promotion of greater understanding between cultures, which are essential aspects of partnership."

Among other achievements, the Barcelona Conference

brought to one table Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, thus marking the first official participation of the three countries in public meetings since the Madrid conference in 1992. It also set the year 2010 as the target date for the gradual establishment of a Mediterranean free trade area. Tariff and non-tariff barriers will be progressively eliminated in accordance with time-tables between the partners, and agricultural products and services will be liberalized step by step.

The creation of a free trade area will be underpinned by a substantial increase in EU financial assistance, to encourage sustainable indigenous development and mobilize local economic operators. An amount of ECU 4, 685 million has already been allocated for 1995-1999 by the European Investment Bank (EIB) by increased loans, and bilateral financial contribution from the member states.

To ensure the continuity of

the momentum developed by the conference, the participants agreed to set up a follow-up committee at the senior-official level, consisting of a European Union Troika and one representative of each Mediterranean partner. This committee will hold regular meetings to prepare for the meetings of foreign ministers of both sides, take stock of and evaluate the follow-up to the Barcelona process, and update the work program adopted by the conference participants.

Euro-Med Agreements: Tunisia: On 17 July 1995, Tunisia committed itself for the next 12 years to liberalizing industrial trade with the EC which already admits Tunisian industrial products free of duty. Financial support has been agreed to "level up its economy". Market access for its agricultural products will be improved.

Israel: The agreement signed foresees a total liberalization of industrial trade,

improved reciprocal access for agricultural products, and enhanced economic, technical, and financial cooperation in science and technology. Moreover, under the agreement, Israel will enjoy the observer status in the community's management committees for research and development.

Morocco: The agreement signed in November '95 between the two sides is identical in all aspects with that signed in Tunisia, except that it takes into account the specific characteristics of traditional trade between the community and Morocco.

Egypt: Detailed examination of the various headings of the future agreement took place last October. Several issues still need to be settled, particularly how tariffs will be dismantled so that there will be a balance of advantage in industrial trade. In fact, Egypt would like to have a sufficiently long transition period and support for its industry. Egypt is also asking

for better access to Europe for its agricultural products.

Jordan: In October '95, Jordan and the EC began negotiations on a new agreement. Jordan subscribes to the creation of an industrial free trade zone. The EC promises its economic, technical, and financial cooperation in supporting political reforms in Jordan, and its help in promoting trade liberalization. The EC also aims at "facilitating the creation of a free trade zone between Jordan and its neighbors, especially Egypt, Israel, and the PNA areas."

Syria: Cooperation with Syria, which began under the cooperation agreement of 1977, was suspended in 1986, and re-started in 1991. It is currently focused on implementing the 3rd and 4th financial protocols. In January 1995, the commission decided to finance a program to modernize banking in Syria at a cost of ECU 4.5 million, with the purpose of encouraging the emergence of the private sector.

A stock-picking plan for a lofty new year

MOST STOCK-picking systems are bunk. They're either too complicated or too risky, or they're based on faulty premises, or they just don't work over time.

But here's a system that has none of those drawbacks. You can call your broker and get started immediately, as the year begins. And, while the system works in all kinds of markets, it's especially suited to the frighteningly lofty one we've got right now. As with any investment plan, of course, there are no guarantees.

The system is absurdly simple. At the start of each year, invest equal amounts of money in the 10 stocks with the highest yield among the 30 stocks that make up the Dow Jones industrial average. Then, at the end of the year, sell the stocks and repeat the process.

"Yield," by the way, is the dividend percentage rate. If a stock is trading at \$100 a share and its dividend is \$4 a year (usually paid in quarterly installments), then the yield is four percent.

The system was invented by John Slater, a Cleveland investment advisor and writer,

and extolled by other market mavens, including Harvey C. Knowles III and Damon H. Pett in their book, *The Dividend Investor*.

Knowles tested the system, called the "Dow 10," back in 1973. He found these results, which can safely be termed incredible:

In total return (price gains plus dividends), the Dow 10 beat the Dow as a whole in 18 out of the 23 years, or 78 percent of the time.

Through 1994, the average annual total return for the Dow 10 was 17.5 percent; for the full Dow, 11.5 percent. That's a huge difference. In 10 years, an investment growing at 17.5 percent will quintuple, while an investment growing at 11.5 percent merely triples.

The full Dow has had six losing years since 1973, but the Dow 10 has had only two, declining eight percent in 1990

and just a percent in 1977.

In the killer bear-market years, 1973-74, the full Dow lost 34 percent—and a repeat of that episode can't be ruled out as the century draws to a close. But in 1973-74, the Dow 10 actually scored a positive return of five percent.

Even in roaring bull markets, the Dow 10 has generally whipped the Dow. In 1975, the system returned 53 percent while the Dow returned 44 percent; in 1991, it returned 34 percent compared with 25 percent for the full Dow.

And in 1995? Based on an analysis by Bloomberg Business News of stocks from Dec. 29, 1994, to Dec. 29, 1995 (final results for the year weren't complete by press time), the total return for the Dow 10 was 44.4 percent; for the full Dow, 36.9 percent.

I asked Slater why the system works. He began by say-

ing that he's a strong believer in "value" investing—in other words, buying stocks that are disliked by the market rather than stocks that are the current darlings. Research has shown that this bargain-hunting style pays off.

But how to define "value" stocks? "You can use different measurements," Slater told me, "including P/E (price-to-earnings ratio), P/B (price-to-book-value ratio), or yield. If you took any one of those three, you would do well. But yield is handy. You don't have to think or do any calculations."

He added, "The point is that yield is a symbol of value, of a stock's unpopularity."

You can find a stock's yield in the daily stock tables in the newspaper. You can find its P/E as well, but that ratio can be tricky; it's often distorted by special events. Yield tends to be a sturdier number, especially among the blue-chip stocks that make up the Dow.

Yield is merely a stock's "indicated" (or expected) dividend divided by its price. Dividends are a good measurement of long term profits and price, of course, is the best measurement of the market's enthusiasm for a stock. If the market is sour on a stock but profits remain solid, then the yield will be high.

Of course, different companies have different dividend policies. Fast-growing high-tech firms like Microsoft Corp. pay no dividends at all, preferring to retain their profits and use them for internal investment (buying machines, building new plants) rather than passing them on to investors.

Energy companies, banks and old-line manufacturers traditionally pay high dividends while consumer-products firms take varying divergent approaches. The Coca-Cola Co., for instance, has a yield that generally runs around 1 percent while the dividend of Philip Morris Cos. is five per-

cent or higher.

Slater admits that one drawback of his system is that it's top-heavy in oils. The three Dow oil stocks—Exxon corp., Chevron Corp. and Amoco Inc.—almost always make up 10 percent of the Dow 10 list. As a result, they're 30 percent of its gains, even though they're only 10 percent of the Dow.

For that reason, Slater says, the Dow 10 shouldn't comprise your entire investment portfolio. "I would tell people to put only about 25 to 30 percent of their money into these (Dow 10) stocks."

Still, oil stocks are frequently excellent value plays; the market rarely finds them sexy, so they often languish, profitable but unloved.

A more significant problem with the Dow 10 system is the tax bite. Dividends are taxed as ordinary income—a rate of 39.6 percent for the very rich and 28 percent for middle-income families. Capital gains, with a current top rate of 28 percent, are incurred when you sell stocks at a profit, and a system like the Dow 10 generates such sales at the end of each year.

For that reason, the Dow 10 is a good portfolio for your tax-deferred IRA or 401 (k) plan. But even if you can duck the taxes, you can't duck the brokerage commissions.

Buying stocks that pay good dividends makes sense, whether they're Dow stocks or not. Slater notes that, historically, "almost half of the total return of stocks has come from dividends."

While payouts can be cut if a company falls on hard times (International Business Machines Corp.'s went from \$4.84 in 1992 to \$1.00 in 1995), dividends normally provide a steady flow of income, even when the market heads down.

Business Chronicle

CBJ paves way for economic growth

The new instructions issued by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) to promote the credit facility ceilings have been positively received by many bankers and stock market dealers.

These ceilings have been raised to JD 0.5 million for ordinary clients, and JD 1 million for corporate bodies, (these were JD 150,000 and JD 300,000 respectively in the past). These flexible measures would certainly revive the shares circulation on the Amman Financial Market (AFM) which has been receding during the last successive years. Combined with the new Investment Promotion Law, these CBJ measures are anticipated to equip the AFM with effective means for a strong start in 1996.

The new CBJ instructions allow all licensed banks to offer an ordinary client a credit facility of up to JD 150,000 and JD 300,000 to a corporate body without reference to the CBJ, an imperative that was formerly binding for JD 50,000 and above.

Flexible credit facility ceilings and their compatibility to the developments of the capital market and the freer movement of the banks in running their operations, are essential factors to finance development in market economies.

At the end of 1995, the stock rates closed at a 10.84% increase. The trading volume fell by JD 75 million—from JD 495 million in 1994 to JD 420 million in 1995.

However, the AFM figures also show that the discrepancy in the circulated shares between 1994 and 1995 is not as big as the trading volume. Total shares were 175.2 million and 175.1 million respectively. Clearly, this was the result of the depreciation of stock rates and the increase of dealings in the parallel market in 1995 by 16.9%—from 253,700 in 1994 to 210,800 contracts in 1995.

The highest percentage increase (19.31%) recorded in 1995 was for banks which amounted to 188.25 points at the close of the year. Shares of the industrial sector rose by 1.42% and their standard figure reached 129.95 points, while shares of the service companies devalued by 1.13% and recorded a standard figure of 129.11 points. The shares of the insurance companies witnessed the most depreciation by 5.39% with a standard figure of 130.77 points.

In December '95 alone, trading volume was JD 29 million compared to JD 29.2 million in December '94. Stock circulation in December '95 was 13.2 million against 11.8 million in the same month of the year before. As for the executed contracts, they amounted to 17,600 in December '95, compared to 12,300 in December '94 (42.5% increase).

MARKETING

By Yinal Kandour

Advertising in Jordan

HAVE YOU noticed an increase in television and newspaper advertisements over the last two years? How about the billboards that seem to appear on just about every main street in Amman? They are not always very attractive, are they, but they are getting better.

Advertising in Jordan is undergoing a major transformation: from haphazard attempts at attracting consumers, to studied efforts that communicate very specific messages, derived from more precise corporate marketing objectives. Of all the branches that constitute the "marketing tree," advertising (sometimes referred to as "marketing communications") is the area experiencing the strongest qualitative development in Jordan today.

This is marked, and indeed helped, by the arrival of a handful of "more professional agencies" that are subsidiaries of international advertising networks - Saatchi & Saatchi, Aftor Promo, Horizon, Intermarkets and Image Net. These agencies, with their international standards and capabilities, put competitive pressures on local advertisers to perform better, which is good. Their presence, in the long run, signifies imminent growth and, ultimately, increased competition among businesses in general - which is good for the Jordanian consumer.

The irony of the situation is that Jordanian businesses, which stand to benefit the most from an increase in the quality of advertising and the inherent revenue increases, are generally speaking, not willing to spend the amounts necessary to support that increase in quality.

To a certain extent, this is understandable, for the concept of including an advertising budget as a permanent balance sheet expense has not fully taken hold in the Jordanian commercial psyche... yet. But, rest assured that it will, because competitive pressures make this development inevitable. I anticipate that by the end of this decade, general managers in all Jordanian business sectors will be taking the issue of advertising a lot more seriously, and at least as seriously as their competitors do...

As more and more participants enter the market for a certain product or service, the competitive issue changes from one of fighting for a share of market-growth to maintaining the existing market share (or trying to get a larger slice of the same pie). Companies that have established themselves early on in a particular market now find it harder to maintain the same sales revenues. At this point, a company's main priority is to defend its market share, and good advertising derived from a sound strategy, can be extremely effective in furthering that goal. Advertising isn't a guarantee to success, but there certainly is a very strong correlation between increased advertising and increased sales. "Advertise or die?" I wouldn't go that far, but don't advertise in a competitive market, and you're sure to "miss the boat!"

MARKET WATCH

30 Dec - 2 Jan

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Mining 5.00 Shamir & Wearing 5.00 Central Trading & Storage 5.33 	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arab Financial Invest. 4.05 National Chlorine Industry 2.53 Int'l Ceramic Manufacture 3.65
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exmarines Invest Hold 5.22 Rafid Industrial 1.80 Al Nisr Insurance 3.37 	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jordan Phosphate Mines 5.07 Central Trade & Storage 5.06 Jordan Kuwait Bank 4.61

General Price Pointer	159.170	156.568
Trade Volume	1949308	1535981
Stock Volume	987105	683025

Highest Traded Stocks	None	None	None	+ Jordan Cement Factory 479.568
+ Arab Pharmaceutical	190.229			

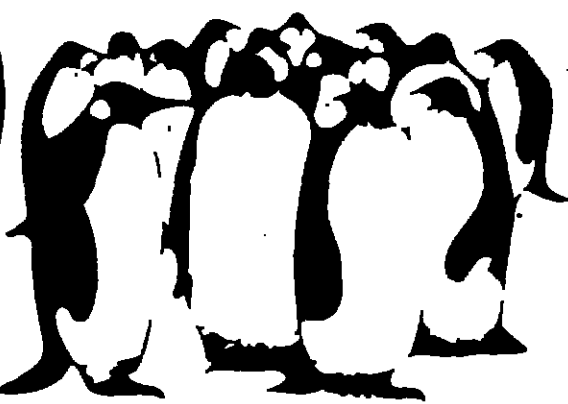
All data provided by

Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949



"You pulled too hard!" "No... YOU pulled too hard!"

AROUND TOWN



Bazaar at Al Isra'a University

Under the patronage of the President of Al Isra'a University, Dr. Abdel Bari Dawab, the students of Public Services organized a bazaar at the University campus.

A number of private companies and institutions participated in the bazaar. They displayed stationary, gifts, light food and embroidery, basic needs for students.



Phoenix emerges stronger than ever

By Eyad Ammari
Special to the Star

NEW YEAR'S day marked the launching date of the latest issue of *Phoenix*, the cultural bi-weekly paper that is published and funded by the Phoenix Gallery. The third issue of the paper, numbered two after issues zero and one, is filled with essays, poetry, and social studies - very much according to its purpose.

Phoenix is primarily interested in publicizing various cultural subjects beyond the circle of intelligentsia, free from the bias of politics, political parties, and the multiplicity of the current state of things. The paper also aspires to create a medium which for a long time was lost among marginal essays in local newspapers and bureaucratic publications that often failed to give the proper credit to the materials discussed.

Ali Al-Shalah, editorial manager of *Phoenix*, said that it was the ambition of the paper to be able to identify local and Arab intellectuals, giving them recognition. They will encour-

age any artist by giving a full report about any exhibition or new work whenever possible. They are more than willing to publish any new writer, and the only criterion for publication is the quality of the material itself.

One of the goals of the paper is strengthening the bonds between Arab cultural icons and Arab cultural sources in general. "There have been attempts to create such a paper before, but we didn't see much that would have to be overcome on the Arab level as the absence of literature of other Arab countries in every Arab state. West African writers are a myth to most Middle Easterners and vice-versa. The Arabic Language Associations, whose primary goal is the unification and standardization of usage and the Arabization of foreign words have been in disagreement over many issues and for a long time. We are hoping that *Phoenix* will continue to address such issues as part of its mission of creating a com-



mon denominator for the Arab culture," said Al-Shalah.

The paper is still in its infancy, and many hopes have been built upon it. Readers have remarked on a number of issues that should be addressed in future issues: The photography employed is rather weaker than the substance of the articles and in many cases the subject of the picture is not clear. The use of computer typesetting is causing many lines in the essay to start with commas and periods. This may be a minor error in any other language, but in Arabic it is one of the greatest taboos.

The staff of the paper and the gallery said that the word *Phoenix* was borrowed from

Greek mythology - that of the fire bird. Unfortunately, they dropped the letter 'O' from the word, which creates unnecessary criticisms to the paper and the gallery, undermining their achievements.

Phoenix comes out on the first and fifteenth of every month, currently at an ambitious starting circulation of five thousand copies. The paper accepts only enough advertising to cover its printing expenses and royalties to the writers.

Mr. Salah said that eventually they might add an English section, which many readers are looking forward to.

International Committee of the Red Cross The humanitarian mission continues

By Oroub Al Abed
Special to The Star

WHILE THE SUPERPOWER conflict of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union is a thing of the past, regional conflicts are not. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that no less than 35 internal conflicts worldwide pose a tremendous challenge to those whose mission is to extend humanitarian aid to the victims.

The mission of the ICRC has not changed with time, said Mr. Mustafa Kaissis who is in charge of the publishing and information department at the committee's Amman office. He said the ICRC as a humanitarian organization acts directly to help war victims and those undergoing harsh living conditions in addition to those deprived of their freedom with the objective of preserving human resources.

Mr. Kaissis told *The Star* that the ICRC offers its services based on an article of its statutes which designates that "the International Committee of the Red Cross may take any humanitarian initiative which comes within its role as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary, and may consider any question requiring examination by such an institution."

The 51 missions of the ICRC, which are spread all over the world, focus on accomplishing their traditional tasks of protecting detained individuals and civilians, offering emergency medical assistance, and preventive action - especially spreading knowledge of international humanitarian law. "According to the Geneva Agreement, citizens should be protected and our task is to be the connection for those disconnected from the outside world," explained Mr. Kaissis. The ICRC in Amman continuously visits detained individuals in prisons to assess their situation and to let them express their feelings to the representative of the ICRC. "The visits benefit not only the people whom the institution is helping, but also the state or political entity accepting the offer," added Mr. Kaissis. "All ICRC action has a calming influence and eliminates some of the causes of tension. Furthermore, ICRC visits demonstrate the authorities' desire to ensure that the persons they are detaining receive a humane treatment," reads an ICRC brochure.

"Last November, we organized a special visit for Jordanian families to see their relatives who were detained in Kuwait," said Abd Al Karim Al Hindi from the Tracing Agency, which is part of the

ICRC. Another 25 families visited detained individuals in the Occupied Territories. The visits, aiming to reunite family members, are exceptional because security guards are not present during the visits, which are conducted under the supervision of the ICRC. "These visits have a very positive impact on the psychological condition of the prisoner," said Mr. Al Hindi.

The Tracing Agency, through a worldwide network, mobilizes all resources to respond to immense needs in extremely difficult situations. "Our task is to look for information and people as well as to transmit the information about lost, ill or dead people," Mr. Al Hindi said.

The agency was founded in Amman after the 1967 war when the need to gather information about lost or jailed members of families in the Occupied Territories became dire.

The main mission was to send urgent news by phone, telex or the radio to and from Jordan about family members in addition to the transport of patients in cooperation with the Red Crescent. "With the signing of peace in the region and the opening of direct telephone lines, our mission has been reduced," said Mr. Al Hindi.



Nevertheless, the ICRC has announced that it is staying in the Middle East to serve the needs of the peace such as protecting civilians and reuniting dispersed families. The ICRC's Chairman in Geneva Dr. Corrado Sumaraga announced that the committee still has work to do since peace has not yet reached the whole region. "Our activities aim basically to prevent suffering and not conflicts," Dr. Sumaraga was quoted as saying by the local press recently. "It is not our work to prevent wars because we are not a political organization, on the contrary we are neutral because we want to reach victims and help them."

BENTLEY SYSTEMS Inc., the leader in professional computer-aided design products and services to engineering organizations, has recently announced in a seminar held at the Bahrain Hilton Hotel on 11 December, a major productivity upgrade to its entire MicroStation range of products. This MicroStation "Class of 95" holds technology that dramatically increases user productivity, according to industry tests, and readies user environments for the latest MicroStation OpenSpace Application.

MicroStation '95 features a streamlined graphical user interface, the new AccuDraw and Smartline drawing technologies, as well as a multiplatform MicroStation.BASIC language and development environment. The standard AccuDraw technology enhances productivity in almost all user design tasks by speeding placement of precise data points, a continual action in CAD. Much of the new technology in MicroStation '95 is inherited and advanced

Bentley launches MicroStation '95 International office opened in Bahrain

from the new renowned MicroStation PowerDraft product introduced earlier this year.

Paul McIver, General Manager, Bentley Systems Mid World Ltd., comments, "this upgrade is focused in boosting user productivity. MicroStation is one of the best kept secrets. In the last few years, we have carefully studied design interaction and engineered the industry's most modern and productive design environment."

Jamil Al Najjar, Managing Director of Hi-Tech, the exclusive agent and the Bentley Business Center in Bahrain comments, "MicroStation '95 definitely improves productivity. With its new GUI and

AccuDraw capabilities, users will be able to design and draft much more quickly.

Bentley has recently appointed Hi-Tech as its authorized reseller in Bahrain. Hi-Tech's role as a reseller of the entire range of Bentley Systems software include sales and marketing, product demonstrations, installation and commissioning of products, software support training, customisation and consultancy.

New Branch Office
Bentley has recently opened its branch office in Bahrain. The opening of the office is the result of Bentley's plan to provide per sales technical support to its growing market. The

office is managed by Mr. Ian Best.

"Bahrain is an important market for the IT industry. During recent months, we have undertaken a series of strategic initiatives in the market aimed at strengthening our local position. The opening of the branch office is a further expression of our commitment to this market," said Ted Lambo, Vice President, Sales and Marketing, of Bentley.

The office will provide quality engineering support for users and companies utilising Bentley software. It will also be responsible for corporate technical liaison activity for new product designs.

JBSP Addresses Jordanian Women Workshop sessions held in co-operation with JWU

THE JORDAN Birth Spacing Project has begun its activities involving Jordanian women's groups, to further educate women on birth spacing, its benefits, and the various methods offered through the project.

These activities started on 20 December, 1995. Four sessions are held in co-operation with the Jordanian Women's Union.

The Jordan Birth Spacing Project is a partnership among international pharmaceutical manufacturers, Jordanian pharmaceutical distributors, private sector physicians, pharmacists, and communications professionals. Its goal is to make available to Jordanian women and their families safe, effective, and affordable modern contraceptive methods. The project is a private sector effort under the sponsorship of the Jordan Ministry of Health.

The sessions are conducted by leading experts both from the Ministry of Health and the private sector in Jordan's medical and pharmaceutical fields.

The Jordan Birth Spacing Project includes among its partners private sector physicians and pharmacists. These service providers are the major sources of information on birth spacing methods for women in Jordan, and they are influential in the adoption and continued use of birth spacing methods.

Seasonal offers at Le Meridien and Forte Grand

THIS WINTER season has provided Forte Hotels with an ideal opportunity to showcase its new promotional packages which highlight the variety and range of Le Meridien and Forte Grand hotels worldwide.

"For the first time we have put together a series of promotional packages which will appeal to both business and leisure travellers throughout the Middle East," said Russel Sharpe, senior vice president, sales and marketing, Middle East, India, East and South Africa.

Included in the package is the Winter Passport, which offers savings of up to 50% at over 80 Le Meridien and Forte Grand hotels worldwide and will continue until the end of February.

Business travellers visiting cities such as London, Tokyo, and New York or leisure travellers taking a break in destinations as diverse as Dubai, Cairo, Lisbon, Brussels and Singapore can take advantage of the offer.

In the Middle East, the Winter Passport can result in up to 30% savings for guests staying at Le Meridien, Bahrain; Forte Grand Jumeira Beach in Dubai; Le Meridien Cairo; and Le Meridien Al-Khobar.

Also launched this season is the 'Let's Meet in the Middle East 1996' package, which is dedicated to business groups and conference organizers offering special room rates and group bookings in Le Meridien and Forte Grand hotels throughout the region.

"With fifteen five star hotels in the Middle East, it makes sense to promote the choice of meeting and banqueting facilities offered by them," said Raja Nasri, vice president, sales and marketing, Le Meridien and Forte Grand Middle East.

"For example, in Egypt alone, we have four priorities including Le Champollion, the luxury Nile cruiser, which would make an unusual and luxurious conference venue," he said.

Under the terms of the 'Let's Meet in the Middle East' package, guests are provided with a number of service extras including a dedicated meeting room, complimentary room policy - one free room for every ten guests, use of the hotel's audio visual equipment, Business Center facilities, airport transfer, and a guaranteed level of service ensuring that each meeting or conference receives expert attention.

OVERHEARD AT TURINO.

Turino: The Celebration Success Story!

NEW YEAR'S Celebration at Turino: A classy success story.

New Year's at Turino's Club Restaurant - Sweetyeh: Claimed to be the most successful Gala dinners party in Amman.

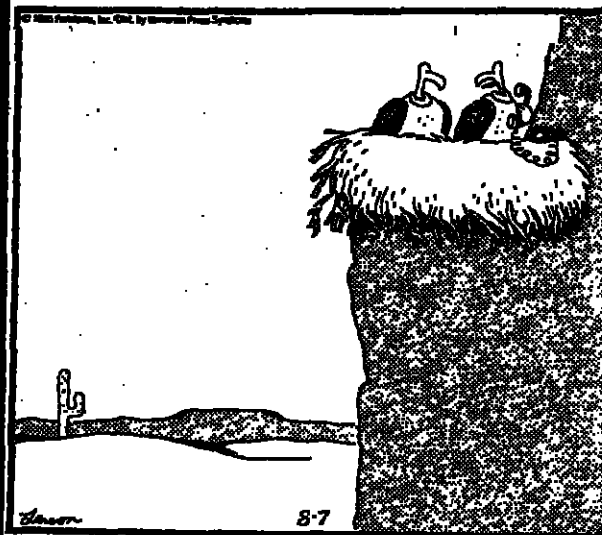
Last minute advertising blitz was very rewarding. Turino Club Restaurant was oversold. Many TURINO band dinners found themselves unable to secure entry. TCR was filled with various groups and clientele. Among the distinguished guests, our reporter recognized Dr. and Mrs. M. Hijazi, Mr. and Mrs. N. Azar-Mr. and Mrs. Ghantous and many Jordanian and visiting socialites. The Cyprus Airlines' ticket to Larnaca was won by one of Mr. Nazih Azar guests. The Turino Blasters Band and Nerissa Guest Singer were a great attraction. The Turino crowd wined and dined till the early hours of the morning although some of them took the option of the early oriental breakfast leaving around 7:00 a.m. Few guests flooded from other hotels after 9:30 am for a night cap, a last dance and the breakfast.

It turned out that Turino has kept its promise of LIVELINESS & ABUNDANCE all at the affordable price of JD 39 inclusive/person!

This year we hear that Turino Club Restaurant has a multi-optional menu for the health oriented clients. Menus shall be set in price ranges of 10-11-12 JD exclusive of taxes. Only a few items shall be left a-la-carte for the VERY DISCERNING GUESTS. TURINO DESSERTS MENU is now out. Guests can choose from a variety of desserts ordered a-la-carte, prepared and cooked on request. Turino is planning to celebrate its 3rd year of success in the Jordanian market in lavish style. Let's wait and see! You may phone Turino for details 863944.

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



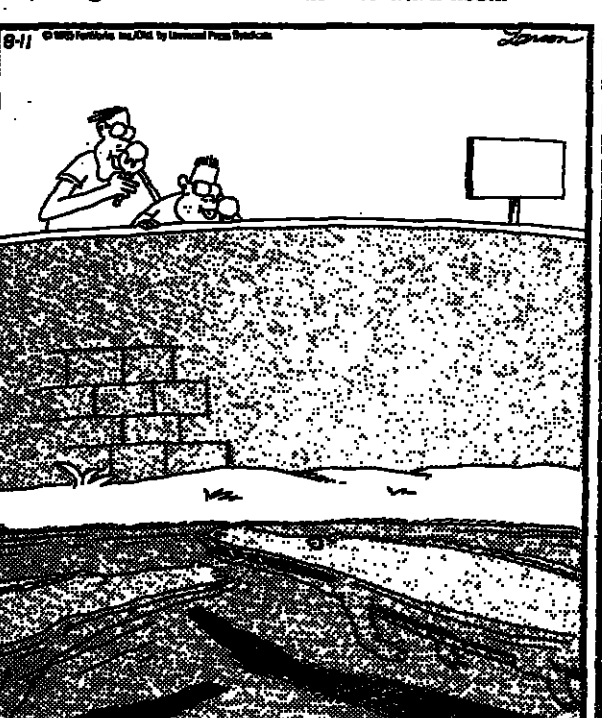
"It's the Websters. They say there's some pitiful thing dying of thirst out their way, and would we like to come over?"



"As if we all knew where we're going."



"Doreen! There's a spider on you! One of those big, hairy, brown ones with the long legs that can move like the wind itself!"



"Great... Just great, you imbecile! I've been floating here for hours like a harmless log and you come up and start talking to me!"

AGENDA

Exhibitions

- *Petra. Traces de Passage*, by Rafaela IDE-Chabrol, at the French Culture Center, on Sunday 7 January at 6 pm
- "The autobiography of an eye", photography exhibition at Darat al Funun by the poet Ibrahim Nasralla until 15 January.

Films

- Film for children and youth at the Goethe Institute on Saturday, 6 January at 8 pm
- *Suspect*, at The American Center today, Thursday, 4 January at 5 pm

The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV
from 6 - 12 Jan.

GoldStar

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Cinema

"FIRST KNIGHT" (Columbia/Tristar, \$100.71): The legend of Camelot gets a retelling in director Jerry Zucker's ("Ghost") version, with Sean Connery as King Arthur and Richard Gere as Lancelot ... still competing for the love of Guinevere (Julia Ormond, also in the new remake of "Sabrina"). The script by playwright William Nicholson ("Shadowlands") puts some new twists in the familiar saga. ** (PG-13: AS, P, V)

"THE ENGLISHMAN WHO WENT UP A HILL BUT CAME DOWN A MOUNTAIN" (Miramax,): In writer-director Christopher Monger's gentle comedy, Hugh Grant stars as a cartographer who surveys a town's landmark, since the residents want it certified as a piece of history. However, the hill in question turns out to be too short to qualify ... so he tries to help the locals increase its height. Tara Fitzgerald, who appeared with Grant in "Sirens," also stars. *** (PG: AS, P)

HELD OVER: "FORGET PARIS" (Columbia/Tristar,): The latest of Billy Crystal's multiple-role efforts — as producer, director, co-writer and star in this case — this romantic comedy features him as a basketball referee who finds unexpected love with an airline employee (Debra Winger). Their resulting marriage begins blissfully enough, but doesn't stay that way very long; Joe Mantegna and Cathy Moriarty co-star. *** (PG-13: AS, P)

"FLUKE" (MGM/UA,): A twist on the theme of reincarnation, director and co-writer Carlo Carlei's fantasy casts Matthew Modine as a family man who dies, then comes back to life ... as a dog, which the fellow's widow (Nancy Travis, of "Almost Perfect") and son (Max Pomeranc) decide to keep around, since the pooch has an uncanny knowledge of their needs. Eric Stoltz also is featured. ** (PG: P, V)

"BROKEN TRUST" (Turner,): Tom Selleck returned to television in this fine drama, made for cable's TNT and written for the home screen by the renowned team of Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne. The actor plays a judge who becomes involved in a Justice Department "sting" operation to expose corruption among his peers; Elizabeth McGovern, William Atherton and Marsha Mason also star. *** (Not rated: AS, P, V)

COMING SOON: "AN AWFULLY BIG ADVENTURE" (New Line, Dec. 19): Hugh Grant has a now-uncharacteristic role in this comedy about a young woman's (Georgina Cates) entry into theater. (R)

"BELLE DE JOUR" (Miramax, Dec. 19): Coming to video for the first time, director Luis Buñuel's classic stars Catherine Deneuve as a housewife leading a double life. (R)

"CLUELESS" (Paramount, Dec. 19): Alicia Silverstone stars in this comedy hit as a very "with-it" young lady who counsels her friends on how to be popular. (PG-13)

FAMILY-VIEWING GUIDE KEY: AS, adult situations; N, nudity; P, profanity; V, violence; GV, particularly graphic violence.

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ENGLISH PROGRAM

SATURDAY

2:00—Moomins
2:30—Harry and the Hendersons
3:00—Blue Heelers
3:30—Only in Hollywood
4:05—1 Love Lucy
4:30—Sky Trackers
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Major Dad
8:00—The Stamp of Greatness
8:25—The Bold and the Beautiful
9:10—Star Trek: The Next Generation
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Feature Film
11:50—Behaving Badly

SUNDAY

2:00—Shelley Duvall's Bedtime Stories
2:30—Feature Film
4:05—1 Love Lucy
4:30—Sky Trackers
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Boogies Diner
8:00—The Stamp of Greatness
8:25—The Bold and the Beautiful
9:10—The American Chart Show
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Feature Film
11:15—Stay Lucky

MONDAY

2:00—Shelley Duvall's Bedtime Stories
2:30—Richie Rich
3:00—Play About
3:15—Busin Loose
3:40—Animal of the Mediterranean
4:00—1 Love Lucy
4:30—Sky Trackers
5:00—French Programs

TUESDAY

7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Home Improvement
8:00—Inventions
8:25—The Bold and the Beautiful
9:10—Star Trek: The Next Generation
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Anna
11:10—Taurus Rising
12:00—Ellen

WEDNESDAY

2:00—Captain Planet
2:30—Jonny Quest
2:50—Spirit of Adventure
3:40—Scientific Eye
4:30—Voyagers
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—You Bet Your Life
8:00—The Secret of the Treasure Islands
8:25—The Bold and the Beautiful
9:10—99-1 (Police Drama)
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Feature Film

THURSDAY

2:00—Inspector Gadget
2:30—Ghost Writer
3:00—Bill Nye, The Science Guy
3:30—Amazing Stories
4:00—Voyagers
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Anything for a Laugh
8:00—The Nature of Things
8:25—The Bold and the Beautiful
9:10—Horizon "The Peasant Premier"
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Prism
10:45—Law and Order
11:15—The Silk Road
12:30—Second Thoughts

FRIDAY

1:00—The Little Mermaid
1:30—Beethoven: Cartoon
1:45—Lift Off

NBA Games, Thursday at 2:10

1:15—Fireman Sam
1:25—Super Carrier
1:35—Goldrush in Alaska
4:05—Give Us a Clue
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Short Stories Cinema
8:00—Natural Wonders of Europe
8:45—America's Funniest People
9:15—Widows
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Second Chances
11:30—Feature Film

2:00—Wonder Why
2:25—Super Carrier
3:15—Goldrush in Alaska
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10:25—Second Chances
11:30—Feature Film

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

5:00—Dessin animé Ordy



5:15—Jeunesse
Les Badabocks
5:30—Série
Fruits et légumes
Le fiancé de Marilyn
6:00—Série
C'est mon histoire
Racket au lycée
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Fant pas rêver

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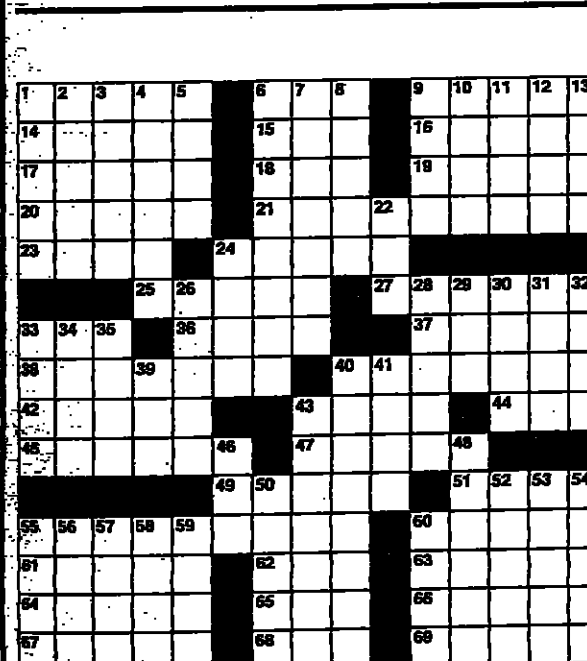
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CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

1 A Kelly
3 Strike
4 fondly
9 Happen again
14 Friendless
15 ones
16 Ecology group, abbr.
18 Ascended
19 Snake
20 Small drink
21 Designated
22 Adjusted
23 Mica
24 Adam's
25 Church plate
26 Ship
27 Haunted
28 Pitched
29 Mideast
30 state, abbr.
31 Window unit
32 Uncanny
33 Stuporous

DOWN

1 Bright light
2 Dressed
3 Win by
4 Blind together
5 Old word
6 Sorry
7 Event
8 Tropic
9 grazer
10 Of a period
11 Unconscious state
12 Exploits
13 Beauty
14 Heroddy
15 Snare
16 Musical
17 drama
18 Listen to
19 Legal thing
20 Russian city
21 Rose or port

32 Tennis items
33 Grain state
34 Shadowbox
35 Impolite
36 Dawson or Delighton
37 Agreeable
38 Factual
39 Loud person
40 Fast plane
41 Get away from
42 Seed coat
43 Roman tongue
44 "we all?"
45 Heroddy holders
46 Harvest
47 Listen to
48 Scratch out
49 infamously
50 suit
51 Backtalk
52 Schoolbook dog

—THIS WEEK'S— HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: Investigate opportunities for work and adventure in a foreign land. Study another language to get ready.

Aries (March 21-April 19). Don't be seduced into abandoning a philosophy you know is right! Convert your opponent, instead!

Taurus (April 20-May 20). You feel like sprucing up your domestic environment. If you don't have enough money, share costs with another person.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). You'll be decisive and confident. Discuss a matter that's close to your heart with one you love.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). A major purchase may have you worried. A distant friend may be able to help you get it wholesale.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). You're even more powerful than usual. Be gentle, too. Make purchasing decisions after reading the small print.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). There's lots of action, but you should do fine. You may even have time to help a friend get organized.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Attend club meetings. Somebody you meet there could help you make your dreams come true.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A person who thinks he or she knows everything is not going to be interested in your opinion. Save it until later.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You'll be intensely scrutinized. Make sure you know the material by heart!

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Find time to research grants and scholarships. Consult a person who can help you arrange all the details in advance.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The opposition you encounter could actually make your plan work better. Don't get defensive; listen and learn!

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Give work your full attention. Do your best to provide what the people want. Once you sort it all out, the rest could be easy.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: You could go to school or work in a foreign country! Investigate the opportunities, train yourself, and get outta here! You can inspire others to achieve great things!

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AT&T G.I.S celebrates the new year in a grand reception

● In its regular annual celebration, AT & T G.I.S. Jordan Branch held a grand reception at the Jordan InterContinental Hotel at the Crown Hall in the 8th Floor. The company's clients attended this remarkable event. Mr. Azzam Shweihat, the General Manager, briefed the invitees on the company's achievements in the past and its plans for the incoming year through its objectives in servicing the public the excellent way. Finally, he wished all of them a prosperous year ahead in the days to come.



Clients who attended the reception

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TIBOR

VERPO

ONASAT

GENNIE

HE HAD A

NON

Answers: TIBOR, VERPO, ONASAT, GENNIE, HE HAD A PET AVERSION, NON

Answers: TIBOR, VERPO, ONASAT, GENNIE, HE HAD A PET AVERSION, NON

Answers: TIBOR, VERPO, ONASAT, GENNIE, HE HAD A PET AVERSION, NON

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Words of Wisdom

There is a great deal to be learned from watching and listening.

... Neglect is the primary reason why relationships die, not because of a single action, but many small indifference.

... If you shoulder your responsibility, there's no room for a chip.

... Tolerance is the oil that keeps relationships running.

... If you forget yourself, someone else will remind you of it later.

... You can't be bitter if you know you were right.

... A friend is one who tells you what's right about you and tries to keep quiet about what's wrong.

SLAPSTIX

When in trouble, mumble.

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Bridge

Too Revealing
By Tannah Hirsch

East-West vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

♠ J 8 2

♥ K 10 9

♦ Q 8

♣ K Q J 4 3

EAST

♠ 6 5

♥ 8 5

♦ A 5 4 3

♣ 9 8 6 5 2

SOUTH

♠ A K Q 10 7 4 3

♥ A 3

♦ K

♣ A 10 7

The bidding:

South

2♣

3♠

4NT

6♣

West

2♥

Pass

Pass

Pass

North

3♠

4♥

5♣

Pass

East

Pass

Pass

Pass

Pass

Opening lead: Nine of ♦

Lead-directing doubles are a fact of life. Once in a while, though, they allow your opponents to wriggle out to a spot where they cannot be touched. This hand is from a match between the United States and Pakistan.

The auction shown is from the room where Pakistan sat North-South. North's cue-bid of four hearts showed a control in that suit and agreed spades as trumps, and North-South settled on the small slam when Blackwood revealed that an ace was missing.

West elected to lead the nine of diamonds in an effort to convey a distinct lack of interest in that suit. East won the ace and had no trouble finding the club shift. West's ruff resulted in a one-trick set.

In the other room the United States, too, was in six spades for a brief moment. Here, however, as a result of a special control-showing response to South's two-club opening bid, North was to declare. As a result, West doubled for a club lead. North-South had a gadget for just such a situation. South redoubled to show doubt about the contract, and North judged well to correct to six no trump.

That became the final contract. Declarer had an anxious moment when East chose the ace of diamonds as the opening lead but, when the king appeared in dummy, all was well.

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WORD WISE

Q: Is it OK to use parentheses in the middle of a sentence, or am I better off using another form of punctuation to set off an aside or phrase?

A: Yes, it's perfectly kosher to use parentheses inside a sentence (a) if it's an independent sentence with the first word capitalized and a period inside the last parentheses; (b) if the first word is not in caps and there's another form of punctuation such as quote marks inside the closing parenthesis.

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

● Avez-vous déjà réfléchi à l'endroit où vous passerez le dernier réveillon du millénaire, le 31 décembre 1999? Non? Ce n'est pas le cas de tout le monde. Selon le quotidien français Libération, plusieurs restaurants parisiens sont d'ores et déjà pleins pour ce qui sera également la dernière nuit du siècle autant que celle de l'année - ce qui est plus commun.

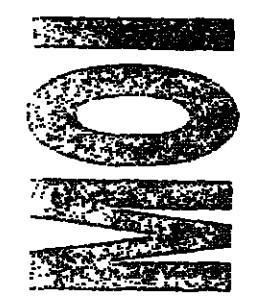
Certains des plus riches gourmets de la planète auraient même réservé leur table à La Tour d'Argent ou chez Maxim's depuis des années pour vivre les premières minutes du troisième millénaire à Paris (notre photo)! Mais tous les restaurants parisiens n'acceptent pas ce genre d'empressement. Le Jules Verne, installé au cœur de la Tour Eiffel, ne veut pas entendre parler de réservations avant 1999. Vous êtes prévenus.

Si malgré cela vous faites chou blanc et n'obtenez pas de table chez l'un des maîtres de la gastronomie parisienne, Le Jourdain vous livre tout de même le menu de Maxim's: homard, caviar, truffes et foie gras... mais, consolez-vous, vous aurez économisé 2 500 francs, soit plus de 350 dinars...



Le Jourdain présente à ses lecteurs ses meilleurs vœux de bonheur pour 1996

SELON



3 Un Jordanien, par nature, n'a pas la patience dans le sang: il veut tout, et tout de suite, sans parfois prendre le temps d'analyser ce qui ne va pas. D'autre part, il voit des problèmes partout mais ne se donne pas la peine de proposer des solutions.

Il s'ajoute à cela que malgré les échecs subis, nous continuons à ne pas renoncer à nos rêves, sans pour autant concevoir un avenir acceptable. Nous ne progresserons jamais si l'on n'essaie pas de comprendre les petits secrets de la société jordanienne. Notre société est artificielle, à la fois complexe et fragile. Elle a été conçue in vitro à une époque où la médecine avait des lacunes. Nous sommes contraints de l'accepter avec toutes ses anomalies.

Depuis la naissance de la Jordanie moderne, il y a moins de 25 ans, nous sommes gérés par des gourmets qui ne voient pas plus loin que le bout de leur nez. Soucieux de masquer leurs insuffisances et de dupes les gens simples et naïfs, ils s'entourent de pseudo-intellectuels au savoir affecté. Nous sommes devenus toxico-dépendants de leurs mensonges. Nous ne pouvons plus vivre sans lire, à nos frères, leurs victoires imaginaires dans les journaux.

Protégés par les cellules du peuple jordanien, ils sont entourés de flatteurs qui prient Dieu afin qu'il nous les protège.

Voilà comment le pays en est arrivé à ce stade de déliquescence: un Jordanien en sur poids au chômage, un sur trois en-dessous du seuil de pauvreté, 82% de la population gagne moins de cinq cents dinars par mois.

La cassure sociale est dramatique et porteuse de dangers. Mais au lieu de demander conseil aux experts, nous continuons à nous faire traiter par les mêmes rebouteux qui, après avoir fragilisé les os, sucent la moelle. Quand cent médecins et chirurgiens abandonnent la faculté de médecine d'Amman en dix ans, c'est qu'il y a un problème. Quand l'indiscipline règne et l'intolérance prime, quand la rigueur manque, quand la maison n'est pas maîtresse de l'action, le pire est à craindre pour le pays.

Certes, il est possible de comprendre le désarroi des Jordanien qui rentrent au pays, se trouvent confrontés à une douloureuse situation sans la moindre reconnaissance.

Mais le temps n'est plus aux rancunes. C'est de la patrie dont il s'agit. La Jordanie dérive aujourd'hui à cause de l'incompétence de l'administration. Faut-il attendre de glisser dans la fosse commune que certains mauvais citoyens ont creusé au pays?

La Jordanie est sous l'effet d'un vent administratif depuis le fait maternel jusqu'aux gouttes anti-dépresseurs. Tous ceux qui aiment ce pays doivent conjuguer leurs efforts et mener la dialyse sociale qui le débarrassera de tous les toxiques qui empoisonnent les citoyens sincères. Ils doivent démasquer l'incompétence de ceux qui agissent par intérêt personnel et qui répètent sans honte: si notre Jordanie n'avait pas vous, vous n'avez qu'à la quitter...

Souhail Alswais

Liban

Réveil au son des canons

Si la guerre civile libanaise est terminée, le sud du pays est toujours sous occupation israélienne. Malgré une guerre qui n'en finit plus, la population survit. Plus ou moins. Reportage.

Hassan, 13 ans, croit que son pays s'étend de Yarout à Kafr Yamoun. Il croit aussi que les chars et les pièces d'artillerie font partie de sa vie de tous les jours. Il connaît son pays par la lecture, il voit la carte et le drapeau libanais à l'écran d'une télévision libanaise dont l'émission est incertaine, sauf lorsque le temps est clair. Il voit tout cela et se lamente. Hassan vit au Sud-Liban occupé.

Son père affirme que son fils a le droit de «respirer l'air pur de [leur] propre pays». Il ajoute, concernant les enfants qui souffrent de la situation: «Nous ne savons pas trop que faire pour leur rendre un peu de leur enfance perdue».

Tout récemment, le gouvernement libanais, en coopération avec l'Unicef, l'organisation des Nations unies pour l'enfance, a organisé des camps d'éducation pour la paix pour filles et garçons. Mais ces camps, qui avaient fourni aux enfants un «espace libre», ont été interrompus et les enfants sont de nouveau livrés à l'oisiveté.

Comme l'explique l'Unicef, ces camps devaient être «l'occasion pour ces enfants de vivre et de partager expériences et activités dans un esprit positif. L'environnement y était propice à l'éveil des talents. En outre, on leur accordait les moyens de connaissance afin qu'ils puissent participer à la reconstruction du Liban». Ces camps devaient combattre la violence, l'hostilité ethnique, la peur et la frustration, imposées par 16 années de guerres civiles.

Aujourd'hui la guerre s'est arrêtée, la souffrance des enfants libanais s'est apaisée partout au Liban, à l'exception des zones du sud toujours occupées par Israël et qui subissent encore le feu des tirs. «Les enfants ont été privés de leur droit de jeu et de récréation, tel que le garantit l'article 31 de la convention des Nations unies sur les droits de l'enfant», explique Ali Bazzi, membre du Comité du service social de la région Bint Jbeil. Quand on prive de jeu un enfant, toute son enfance lui est volée. Le jeu est plus qu'une récréation. Il reflète le système de valeurs de toute une société et les transmet aux générations à venir.



La guerre, comme toujours, frappe d'abord les populations civiles. Maisons détruites, familles dispersées ou amputées sont leur lot quotidien.

Un chef religieux qui préfère garder l'anonymat constate le «taux élevé des élèves de la «zone de sécurité» au Sud-Liban qui ont déserté l'école». «Les parents, ajoute-t-il, ne peuvent plus scolariser leurs enfants du fait des difficultés économiques qui s'ajoutent à un environnement de violence. La communauté souffre du taux d'analphabétisme le plus élevé depuis 40 ou 50 ans».

Hassan, dont le village s'étend au fond d'une vallée, subit cette agonie tous les jours. «Une faction en guerre contre l'autre est en position au sommet de cette colline, l'autre est perchée sur celle d'en face, explique-t-il en pointant du doigt les fortifications des milices soutenues par les Israéliens et celles de la résistance libanaise. Au milieu, nous plongeons sous le tir des missiles, des balles et des obus».

Et ce n'est pas tout pour Hassan. Il y a aussi les mines. «Parfois, elles sont dans votre propre champ ou le long de la route», raconte-t-il. La voiture de son voisin, il y a quelques jours à peine, a sauté sur l'une de ces mines. «Il a été tué sur le coup».

Pour sa sœur Térza, une religieuse catholique de Tyr venue aider les habitants de Bint Jbeil, le problème n'est pas tant le manque de médicaments ou de matériel médical dans son dis-

pensaire qui sert les dix villages environnants que celui des «victimes des bombardements et des mines qui [lui] causent le plus de souffrances». «Je ne sais plus où les envoyer, assure-t-elle. Les routes sont dangereuses et les mines ne font pas la différence entre bergers, paysans ou enfants».

Pile de débris
«La zone de sécurité, assure un autre chef religieux, Cheikh Haidar, vit dans un état de guerre résultant d'une occupation totale. Nous souffrons les effets économiques de toute terre occupée. Parfois, ce sont les prix qui montent en flèche ou le manque de produits alimentaires». «Beaucoup de familles pauvres, ajoute le père chrétien Hanna, frappent à notre porte parce que nous sommes des hommes de religion. Mais la situation courante rend difficile l'assistance à chacun. Nous n'avons pas les moyens de vaincre la vraie pauvreté».

Oum Haidar refuse d'abandonner sa maison transformée en une pile de débris par un raid israélien. Elle regarde les photos de ses trois fils tués lors de l'attaque et pleure. Selon sa voisine, son plus jeune fils aurait pu être sauvé mais «il n'y avait pas d'ambulance dans la zone et nous avons été obligés de le transporter dans un bus d'école qui devait s'arrêter à

chaque contrôle. Lorsque nous sommes arrivés à l'hôpital, c'était trop tard».

Cheikh Haidar se plaint que la région ne dispose pas d'hôpitaux suffisamment équipés, ce qui oblige les gens à aller se soigner ailleurs et entraîne beaucoup de souffrance physique et morale. C'est la faute des frontières et des barrières imposées sur les routes par l'occupation. «L'Unicef, ajoute-t-il, est la seule organisation qui agit jusqu'à présent dans les villages. Chaque village est couvert, un dispensaire a été installé et des médicaments de base apportés. Mais le problème est que cette aide ne concerne que les vaccins, du sérum et autres traitements primaires. Nous avons toujours besoin de plus de médicaments, en particulier pour les maladies chroniques et la chirurgie».

Ali vient de rentrer au village après un long exil imposé. Avant l'occupation israélienne, il était apiculteur. Sa maison a sauté et ses cent ruches ont été détruites. «Elles valaient pour moi plus que tout au monde», Forcé de quitter son habitat, il ne pouvait plus vivre loin de chez lui et espère ne plus être obligé de partir et d'abandonner, à nouveau, ses abeilles. Une espérance qui le hante à chaque lever et coucher de soleil.

Lima Nabil

1er janvier

Bonne année!... Mais laquelle?

Souhaiter une bonne année à ses proches est une habitude; un rituel bien défini. Fêter l'an qui s'achève et prendre de bonnes résolutions pour celui qui s'annonce aussi. Le problème reste de savoir de quelle année on parle...

Chaque nouvelle année célèbre un événement cosmique clairement établi: une nouvelle révolution accomplie autour du Soleil par la Terre. C'est la théorie. La pratique, elle, est plus complexe. Nous ne sommes pas sur un stade où les lignes de départ et d'arrivée sont matérialisées et, problèmes de repères obligent, personne n'a vraiment le même calendrier!

Soyons d'abord astronomes et observons le temps d'un tour de Soleil par la Terre. Nous parlerons d'année sidérale, qui «vaut» 365 jours, 6 heures, 9 minutes et 10 secondes. Cela serait parfait si l'orbite terrestre était un cercle, ce qui, bien évidemment, n'est pas le cas!

Devenons mathématiciens: la distance séparant la Terre du Soleil est d'environ 147 millions de km en janvier et 152 en juillet. L'année anomalistique, qui calcule le temps séparant deux retours de la Terre au plus près du Soleil, est alors de 365 jours, 6 heures, 13 minutes et 53 secondes.

Enfin, nous maintenons l'habitude du géographe, observons, influencé par le cycle des saisons, le retour de Phébus au même endroit, du point de vue zodiacal: l'année tropique s'établit alors à 365 jours, 5 heures 28 minutes et 46 secondes.

Trois bases de calcul, trois années différentes... et tout aussi valables. Intéressant, mais un peu gênant quand il s'agit de choisir!

L'hésitation marque d'ail-

leurs l'histoire des calendriers. Les Romains faisaient débuter le leur au 1er mars; les peuples chrétiens choisirent le 25 décembre (date établie en 337 par le pape Jules Ier comme jour de la naissance du Christ)... ou le 25 mars, jour de l'Annonciation à Marie. Les musulmans préfèrent partir du jour où Mahomet quitta La Mecque pour Médine. En 1564, le roi de France Charles IX fixe le début de l'année légale au 1er janvier. Les révolutionnaires français, promoteurs en 1792 du calendrier républicain choisirent, eux, l'équinoxe d'automne.

Rotation et révolution. Un second dilemme affecte les nombreux - créateurs de calendriers: l'année scientifique - quelle qu'elle soit - ne compte pas un nombre entier de jours. La rotation de la Terre (son mouvement sur elle-même) est en effet indépendante de sa révolution (son mouvement autour du Soleil). D'où l'impossibilité d'imaginer une succession immuable d'années composées du même nombre de jours. Même problème pour ceux qui ont voulu fonder leurs calculs sur les phases de la Lune. Que faire alors?

Le calendrier israélite est «solaire-lunaire», combinant les deux références: il fait alterner des années pouvant compter douze ou treize mois, soit 353 à 385 jours, ceci pour créer un mois «moyen» équivalent à une lunaison et une année

«moyenne» voisine de l'année tropique.

Fondamentalement lunaire en revanche est le calendrier musulman. Son année moyenne est de 354,37 jours. Un cycle de trente ans compose donc 19 années de 354 jours et 11 de 355.

Le calendrier grégorien, en vigueur dans la majeure partie des pays occidentaux, est quant à lui strictement solaire et conçu pour assurer la plus stricte concordance, sur une longue durée, entre années légales et années tropiques. C'est pour cela qu'en 1582 le pape Grégoire XIII reforma le régime des années bissextiles et qu'apparut le décalage (aujourd'hui de treize jours) entre ce nouveau calendrier et le système Julien en vigueur dans les pays orthodoxes.

Dans le décompte des années, le calendrier légal le plus répandu fait partir l'an 1 au 1er janvier qui aurait suivi la naissance du Christ. Même si l'on ne sait pas exactement lorsqu'eut lieu cette naissance. Jésus peut, en réalité, être né trois ou quatre ans avant ou après l'année 0. L'année précédente est considérée comme «l'an 1 avant J.-C.». Si cette proposition satisfait l'esprit commun, elle ne convient pas aux scientifiques qui ne sauraient passer de «-1 à 1! Déjà, en 1770, le savant Cassini préconisait que «-1» devienne «0», «-2» devenant de fait «-1».

Comme le précise un journaliste scientifique, «les normalisateurs sont enfin venus dire leur mot. L'Organisation internationale de standardisation a proposé un calendrier standard, dit ISO, pour désigner jours, semaines et années». La première semaine de l'année étant celle où se trouve le premier jeudi de janvier, pour l'ISO il y a eu 52 semaines en 1994 et autant en 1995... Il y en a 4, en revanche, 53 par an si l'année débute un jeudi, voire un mercredi lorsqu'elle est bissextile.

Bien complexe, diriez-vous? Certes, mais la science ne saurait se satisfaire de certitudes qui nous paraissent pourtant bien établies...

Souhaiter une bonne année est le rituel de janvier.



Tribune économique

Des illusions de la paix à une paix illusoire

Tous les Jordanien ne profitent pas de la croissance. Un objectif de taille pour l'année qui commence.

Comme d'habitude, le début de l'année est autant une occasion de jeter un œil sur l'année écoulée que d'essayer de présenter quelques prévisions pour les douze mois qui s'annoncent.

Les tendances économiques générales de la Jordanie étaient relativement satisfaisantes en 1995: croissance du produit national brut (PNB), stabilité ou diminution des importations, augmentation des exportations et taux d'inflation modeste.

Examiner ces chiffres, et d'autres indicateurs macro-économiques, pourrait nous amener à penser que tout va pour le mieux dans le royaume. D'une certaine façon, c'est pourtant vrai. La situation présente est plus confortable et encourageante que celle des années passées. Mais il faut se méfier d'un excès d'optimisme. 1995 était l'année des illusions de la paix. Sur ce dernier point, 1996 pourrait bien être pire encore.

Malgré des données économiques relativement satisfaisantes, l'année dernière était caractérisée, pour beaucoup de Jordanien de la rue, par une difficulté de vie quotidienne. Comment réconcilier les extrêmes?

L'événement clef de l'économie jordanienne en 1995 est le fameux Sommet économique d'Amman, des 29-31 octobre. Une opinion assez répandue veut que la conférence ait été un succès du point de vue des relations publiques. Mais le pays a besoin de beaucoup plus

que cela pour attirer les investisseurs étrangers et améliorer encore l'économie nationale. En tout cas, les orages politiques de la région et la situation intérieure crispée des pays limitrophes (Syrie, Irak, Arabie Saoudite, Israël/Palestine) garantissent presque qu'un succès comme le Sommet sera suivi d'un échec sur un autre plan.

Dans une telle situation d'instabilité, le gouvernement consolide sa position économique, les grandes sociétés aussi. Mais la base ne suit pas. Les micro-entreprises, les chômeurs et les jeunes diplômés à la recherche d'un emploi paient les frais d'une économie pas suffisamment soucieuse de la prospérité de tous. Le PNB augmente, mais au profit d'une minorité. La politique du gouvernement, notamment fiscale, ne fait rien pour lutter contre ces inégalités qui grandissent et plombent une croissance saine de l'économie jordanienne.

Deux conditions
Les problèmes de l'économie du royaume ne sont pas tant ceux des grands indicateurs que ceux liés à ces questions: A qui profite la croissance et comment partager-on les richesses nationales?

Quoi qu'il en soit, un essor justifié paré entre les différentes couches sociales de la population ne serait pas, en soi, une garantie suffisante pour l'avenir. La Jordanie ne peut tirer un trait sur l'instabilité régionale, qui menace toujours

tout développement économique.

Pour 1996, le couplet ne change pas: pas de décollage jordanien sans stabilité régionale. Le pays ne saurait être un îlot de paix dans une tempête de guerre, de crise politique ou sociale. Pourtant, la paix régionale reste plus un objectif qu'une réalité. Il est - malheureusement - aisé d'imaginer un avenir de troubles et de problèmes économiques pour les voisins de la Jordanie, voire pour le pays lui-même. Il faut évidemment espérer le contraire mais le passé économique a montré que les prévisions les meilleures étaient souvent celles fondées sur le pessimisme.

Il y a deux conditions nécessaires mais pas suffisantes pour une année 1996 économique satisfaisante: restructuration interne et paix régionale. Une restructuration ne passera pas, selon l'opinion d'une vaste majorité d'experts, dont ceux de la Banque mondiale, sans une redéfinition du rapport entre l'Etat et le secteur privé.

La paix est inévitablement liée à l'établissement de relations normales entre tous les pays de la région. Entre la Syrie et Israël, en premier lieu, puis qu'il s'agit du premier champ d'espérances. Mais aussi entre les «frères arabes».

Et ce ne sera peut-être pas le plus simple...

Riad Al Khouri
Economiste et responsable de la revue *Economic perspectives*

Qu'est-ce que l'humanitaire?

Médias et aide humanitaire. Le mariage peut être explosif. Yves Giovannoni, chef de la délégation de la Croix rouge à Amman, donne son opinion.

On ne saurait aujourd'hui négliger l'importance qu'a pris l'humanitaire dans la plupart des médias nationaux et internationaux qui l'ont - peut-être trop souvent - présenté comme valeur-phare d'un meilleur ordre mondial encore en devenir.

Certes, alors qu'en ex-Yugoslavie les ex-Casques bleus ont troqué leurs insignes de l'ONU pour ceux de l'OTAN, l'engagement général pour l'humanitaire médiatisé pourrait bien retomber progressivement au cours de 1996. Restera alors vraisemblablement un certain désarroi, voire désempolement, quant aux vertus qu'on avait attribuées à l'action humanitaire.

Mais qu'est-ce que l'humanitaire? Comme cela est apparu au cours du séminaire organisé à la mi-décembre à Amman par le Comité international de la Croix rouge (CICR) et l'Association de presse jordanienne, peu de gens réalisent que derrière ce terme souvent galvaudé se cachent non seulement des idées reçues, mais aussi des concepts et des approches parfois très différentes - dont certaines ne sont pas dénuées d'arrière-pensées politiques. De fait, depuis la première opération d'ingérence humanitaire au Nord-Irak en 1991, il règne une certaine confusion quant aux mandats des différents organismes spécialisés que l'on retrouve dans les zones conflictuelles les plus médiatisées. Cet état de choses ne transparait que rarement dans les reportages qui nous parviennent. es-



L'essence de l'action humanitaire est le refus de choisir entre les détreffes.

sentiellement parce que les techniques journalistiques employées suivent, malheureusement, de plus en plus souvent une pure logique d'émotion, qui sélectionne les victimes et s'efforce d'attribuer un camp à la détresse humaine.

Au manichéisme des médias, avant tout télévisuels, correspond le discours de la cause juste, propre au domaine du politique. C'est ainsi qu'au cours de ces dernières années, l'annonce politique a subrepticement fini par se confondre avec l'annonce humanitaire et que, du droit à l'assistance en passant par le droit d'ingérence, on en est arrivé aux interventions humanitaires avec couverture militaire. Quant à la justice, il est évident qu'en cas de conflit elle ne peut s'exercer que par identification consensuelle de coupables et d'innocents. Personne ne mettra bien sûr en doute le fait que les criminels de guerre doi-

vent être poursuivis où qu'ils se trouvent. Par contre, le fait que des populations entières puissent aujourd'hui être punies pour les excès commis ou ordonnés par leurs dirigeants n'est pas nécessairement senti comme outrancier - selon de qui l'on parle.

L'essence de l'action humanitaire est le refus de choisir entre les détreffes. Son impartialité devrait être le principe même de sa légitimité. Or il existe depuis quelques années une dérive qui se caractérise par un sérieux risque de politisation de l'action humanitaire et menace d'ébranler sérieusement le fondement des droits des victimes de conflits armés. Ces droits constamment améliorés depuis plus d'un siècle, ont été rassemblés dans ce qu'on appelle le droit international humanitaire (conventions de Genève et leurs protocoles additionnels). Réaliste,

tout en respectant la souveraineté de chaque Etat, ce droit a consacré de nombreuses limitations à l'usage de la force, le traitement des prisonniers ou le sort des populations civiles. Ce droit a été signé par tous les Etats et non produit au gré des majorités éphémères par une institution internationale. Il a intégré les contingences politiques et militaires, énuméré les obligations des Etats signataires dans la conduite des hostilités et envers les victimes et dressé la longue liste des souffrances pouvant résulter de conflits armés dont la plupart sont généralement ignorés par les médias qui nous présentent l'humanitaire essentiellement en termes d'assistance matérielle.

Plus que jamais, il est aujourd'hui urgent de faire connaître l'obligation des Etats de respecter, mais également de faire respecter le droit international humanitaire. En même temps, il est urgent de rappeler que si l'action humanitaire doit être mise en œuvre parallèlement à l'action politique et diplomatique, en aucun cas celle-ci ne saurait-elle se substituer à celle-ci. Car l'action humanitaire ne saurait distinguer une «bonne» d'une «mauvaise» victime: elle se veut neutre afin de prendre en considération les droits de toutes les victimes. Tel était le message du séminaire qui s'est tenu à Amman à la mi-décembre avec la participation de journalistes jordanien-

Yves Giovannoni

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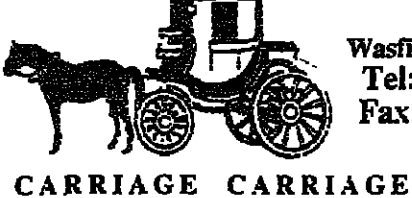
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Edited by Zeid Nasser

AMC's pioneering on-line service provides the digital gateway to Arab business, culture and art:

e-Arabia, a magnificent city in cyberspace

AMIDST THE anticipation of computer users in Jordan to gain on-line connectivity to the Internet, a company based in Jordan has already launched its own WorldWideWeb (www) site incorporating a variety of cultural and religious information on the Arab World.

The company behind this service is Arabian Media Concepts and the service itself is suitably called, Arabia On-Line.

Arabia On-Line presents information to users through an innovative interface.

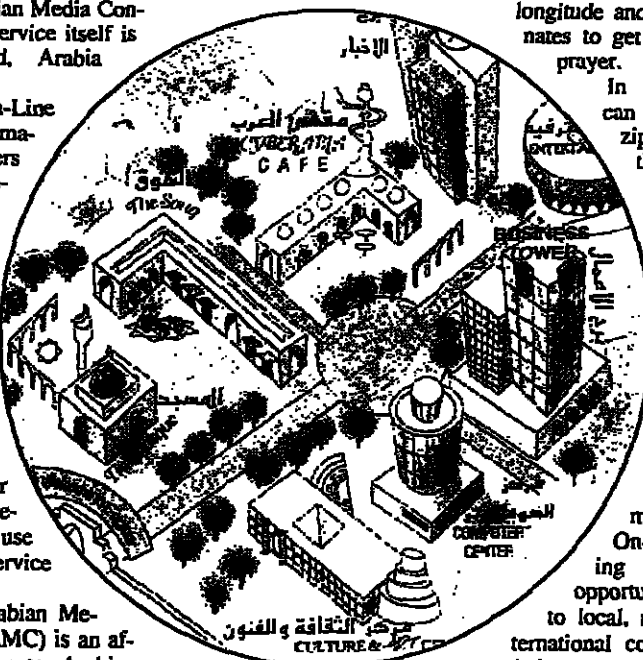
A representation of a city, called e-Arabia, has been developed to facilitate the access to different types of information. The user clicks on any specific building to use any of the service available.

Seeing as Arabian Media Concepts (AMC) is an affiliated company to Arabian Communications & Publishing (ACP), which publishes *BYTE Middle East* and *Al Taqniyah Wal Aamal* magazines, both these publications and more are available on Arabia On-Line. As a matter of fact, Arabia On-Line is turning into a center for Arab newspapers and magazines which are also available on-line.

In addition to *BYTE Middle East* and *Al Taqniyah Wal Aamal*, e-Arabia offers a couple

of newspapers on a test basis to monitor the response of users. The *Star* is available on e-Arabia and has proven to be a hit with over 8,000 users visiting it in its first few weeks. One of the leading Arabic dailies in Jordan, *Ad-Dustour*, has recently been selected for inclusion in e-Arabia.

Users



will be pleased to see that the team behind e-Arabia have worked hard to assure that these publications are represented in a manner true to the original look of the newspapers in print.

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Acer Aspire among the first models to pave the way for the 'chic' home PC: Aspiring for style

THROUGHOUT 1995, PC manufacturers have worked to introduce newer and more 'chic' designs for their PCs. Among the preferred models for most producers, is the 'all-in-one' design which basically made PCs look more and more like compact Macintosh systems.

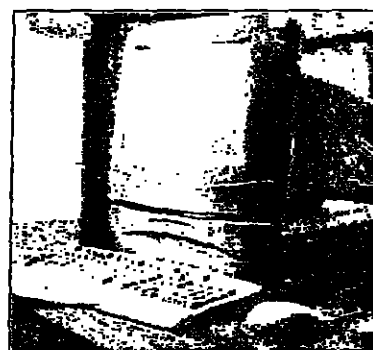
One of the most interesting entrants into this 'stylish' PC market is the new Aspire range of personal computers from Acer.

With its striking black color and curved monitor and case design, it attracts one's attention as a fashionable addition to one's home appliances. The machine itself is a regular PC with more compact components.

Functionality of the Acer Aspire is above average when compared to other PCs as it provides full multimedia features (CD-ROM, sound card, speakers) along with additional luxuries such as an answering machine, speaker phone, fax and on-line ready features.

There are even a variety of pre-loaded software titles spanning different areas from games and leisure to business applications.

According to Acer, the idea behind the Aspire range was to 'design PCs and monitors that blend attractively with any home decor and are easy to use



for any member of the family."

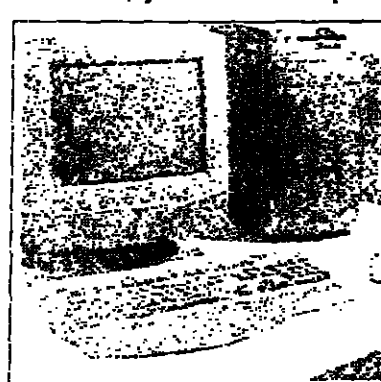
The result was a bold move away from the stiff, box-shaped PC design which usually comes in a beige color. Acer's Aspire and other similar PC designs from the likes of Fujitsu and Phillips represent a certain direction in the computer industry to converge with consumer electronics.

Although it was predicted that these two markets would meet sooner, previous endeavors to introduce the 'all purpose' appliance, such as the Philips CD-TV, proved to be early and buyers were not quick to respond to the concept of a video recorder, TV receiver and PC system all in one box!

However, now the time seems to be right and Acer claims that its stylish Aspire range should stand out in the growing and very crowded PC market.

San Shih, chairman and CEO of The Acer Group said that "Aspire's stylish good looks and functional design, combined with its powerful performance, will revolutionize traditional computing around the globe, making Acer a household consumer brand."

For more information on the Acer Aspire range in Jordan, you can contact Special



Systems Co., at telephone number 682131 or Tantash Information Systems Group at telephone 689252.

News update

The fastest Mac on the market

Power Computing, the producers of Macintosh compatible systems, have recently introduced what the company claims to be the 'fastest Mac system ever' running at 150MHz.

The PowerWave 604, as its name implies, uses the PowerPC 604 processor which is of handling speeds from 120MHz up to 150MHz.

Incorporating PCI and Mbus expansion ports it also one of the most expandable Macs on the market.

Its retail price in the USA is \$4299 complete with multimedia, 24MB RAM, 1 Giga-byte hard disk and built-in Ethernet.

As of yet, there is no specific distributor for Power Computing products in Jordan. If interested, Power Computing can be reached in the USA at telephone (001) 512/258 1350.

Microsoft scrambles to catch the Internet craze

Following its successful launch of Windows 95 towards the end of last year, one of Microsoft's top priorities in 1996 is to break into the booming Internet software market.

With the software of companies like Netscape and Pulsar rocketing in the market, due to the very high demand for Internet browser software and tools, Microsoft feels left out.

Development efforts in this direction will concentrate on providing a powerful alternative Internet software, supported by the might of Microsoft.

In the meantime, Microsoft prepares to introduce Microsoft Network in the Middle East, accompanying the launch of Arab Windows 95 soon.

Steve Jobs becomes a millionaire with Pixar

Some might call him the come-back kid. Steve Jobs, who co-founded Apple Computer Inc. but was pressured out of the company in the mid-

1980s and has failed to bring his NeXT Inc. into mainstream popularity, walked home last month a billionaire.

The 40-year-old Jobs earned \$1.2 billion on paper from the initial public offering of Pixar Animation Studios.

Jobs bought Richmond, Calif.-based Pixar in 1986 from Lucasfilm Ltd. for about \$10 million and has pumped an estimated \$60 million into it in all. He owns 80 percent of Pixar.

Steve Jobs joins the ranks of the billionaires which includes Jobs' close friend Larry Ellison, Oracle Corp.'s chief executive, and his once friend-turned nemesis Bill Gates.

Jobs defied history, allowing lightning to strike twice—first with Apple and now at Pixar. Indeed, back in 1981 Jobs envisioned the personal computer as a consumer appliance.

Pixar is the creative hand behind the Walt Disney new film, *Toy Story* as was responsible for much of its 3-D computerized animation.

INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

Our false Internet predictions, and misconceptions

IT'S FUNNY how times change. Just a few months I wrote a column with the following title 'Internet in Jordan: Not likely'.

Well, my prediction was obviously 'Not intelligent'. Little did I know back then that Sprint was coming to town.

At the time I had built my theory on discussions with a number of people involved in the telecommunications industry who had stated that it would be too expensive to introduce Internet commercially in Jordan. With the limited number of users with modems and the supposedly narrow base of customers, an Internet supplier would have to price the service way too high, in order to cover the cost.

Accordingly, I have to stop to wonder, along with most other enthusiastic computer users in country, if logging onto the Internet will be priced reasonably in Jordan or not.

What is reasonable pricing for such a service? It has to be like the price of Internet connectivity anywhere else in the world.

One of the most important things about the Internet is that it's open to everybody. There's something very democratic and noble about everyone being on the Internet. It's probably why it succeeded in the first place.

As of yet, Sprint has not announced official rates for its service in Jordan. So, maybe Sprint can assist us in concluding this argument by revealing the kind of 'connectivity' or 'service' rates they've got in mind.

What's more, people are not really aware of the nature of the service, the result of which is a variety of rumors regarding how many users can log in at one time and for how long.

It is interesting to think about the actual capacity of Sprint's service. This, technically speaking, is dependant on the type of connection line used and its 'bandwidth'. The line is expected to be of 64Kb/sec bandwidth. You can't exactly calculate how many simultaneous users can be on such a line. At least, I and a couple of other people I asked couldn't.

Also, users are wondering how long they will be able to log on everyday. It is said that users may be offered three hours a day. A colleague of mine commented on this by saying that the Internet is a form of media, like any other, which offers you leisure functions too. Limiting the time to three hours a day is like allowing a person to only watch TV for three hours and then turning it off. Interesting point.

Questions looking for answers. Well, in the next couple of weeks, we'll include an interview with one of Sprint Jordan's executives to clarify these and other issues. In the meantime, let's educate ourselves more about the Internet before gaining the connectivity we have long waited for.

The American Show moves the market

IN ANTICIPATION of the American Computer show '96, to be held by the American Embassy in Amman in the middle of next February, computer distributors and suppliers in Jordan are going through another phase of activity and stepped up marketing efforts.

Already, a number of Jordanian distributors of American hardware and software products have booked their space at the exhibition which will be held at the Philadelphia Hotel. The location of the show, inside Amman and near the main business areas, is a major force behind the optimism of exhibitors that there will be many visitors to the American Products Show. This show has established itself as a major annual event which companies in the country plan for, just as they do for the Middle East Technology Show (METS), which is organized by the Jordan Computer Society.

This year, the American products Show will be bigger and companies will be displaying their latest. Brands you can expect to see at the show include Apple, IBM, AST, AT&T, Hewlett-Packard, Digital and more. If all goes well, and most companies confirm their participation, it will be a show to look out for. Don't miss it.

British royals make new resolutions in the new year

By William D. Montalbano
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

LONDON—His mother is angry. His wife suns herself in silence on a Caribbean beach. His mistress's friends leak backstairs gossip to tabloid newspapers.

One day he may be king, but as a new year dawns, 47-year-old Charles of England is the prince of wails.

Charles versus Diana. The sad story of a fairy tale that crashed and burned is well-known. What makes 1996 different is that pregnant questions demand answers, and resolution is at hand.

There are issues and quandaries enough to satisfy soap opera fans and constitutional experts alike. Will Diana agree to a divorce? And then what would she do, future queen or more?

Would a divorced Prince Charles remarry as king? What would his mistress do if he didn't? In the country's most famous threesome, Camilla Parker-Bowles is, after all, the only one who has not yet blurted out bedroom secrets to television interviewers.

Juicy stuff, but there are national issues at stake as well: British monarchs head not only the state but also the official state religion, the Church of England. Individually and collectively, the royals are expected to be models for a civil, honorable, moral society.

Domestic discord is one thing: Forty-two of every 100 marriages in Britain end in divorce. But marital feuding has gone too far when it discredits the monarchy as an institution.

In 1984, when Charles and Diana had their second son, 77 percent of respondents told pollsters that Britain would be worse off without a monarchy. Then came an increasingly acrimonious marriage leading to an official separation in 1992.

By 1994, when Charles confessed adultery in a TV interview, polls showed that only half as many Britons were as supportive of the monarchy as they were a decade before.

And in a November interview, Diana emphasized her unhappiness with the royal family and acknowledged an affair with a cavalry officer. He had already spilled the beans in an intimate book.



Diana: Damaging the monarchy

Damage to the monarchy was what led Queen Elizabeth, the stiff-lipped personification of all that is royal and proper, to order Charles and 34-year-old Diana to divorce.

Charles agreed immediately. Diana has not replied. Since the queen's demand in late December, royal household artillery has fired nearly constantly—in many different directions.

First, those ubiquitous "friends of Charles" told reporters that, once divorced, the prince would not remarry. That was intended to mollify civic, political, and theological conservatives such as the asso-



Prince Charles: Permission to get divorced



Camilla: Demanding clear commitment

ciation of 1,000 Anglican priests who lamented that the monarchy had fallen prey to a "modern divorce cult."

Divorce would not disqualify Charles from becoming either king or "defender of the faith" as head of the church. Remarriage is problematic but

Sandringham. Diana was conspicuously absent. She had signed her independence from the royal family in the television interview, in which she said she would "not go quietly." If divorced, Diana would never be queen but could look forward to seeing

possible; it requires the assent of both the prime minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the nation's senior churchman. King Edward VIII abdicated in 1936 when he failed to gain permission to marry Wallis Simpson, a

twice-divorced American. The current archbishop, George Carey, is more understanding of domestic discord: Two of his four children are divorced.

Charles' assertion that he would not remarry was overruled almost immediately by a clarification from unnamed Buckingham Palace sources. While the prince has no current intention of remarrying, they murmured, that does not necessarily mean a lifelong commitment to remaining single.

As for the Christmas holidays, Charles passed them with his mother, the queen, his father, Prince Philip, his siblings and his two princely sons at the royal country estate at



Queen Elizabeth: Yet another bad year for the royals

her eldest son, now a 13-year-old schoolboy, being crowned King William. For now, Diana says she would like to be a roving ambassador for Britain. No one seems sure what that means, beyond that it would cost a lot of money and keep her in the public eye.

Parker-Bowles, 48, the newly divorced wife of an army general and a friend of Charles' since 1972, has been hermetic. But "Friends of Camilla say she is tired of conducting their relationship in secret. She is not prepared to be his mistress forever," trumpeted the tabloid *The Express* at the end of December. "She wants a clear commitment to marriage with some role in a consort capacity and a royal title. After all that has happened, particularly when he admitted their affair on television without her consent, her life has become intolerable," the newspaper said, quoting unnamed "senior government officials" as well as the usual "friends."

Now, the reports are being denied as "fanciful nonsense" by more unnamed "friends" who talked with a second newspaper, while a third says that Prime Minister John Major has warned Charles that the British people would not accept Parker-Bowles as his consort.

Remarriage is a longer-term issue, and while British analysts say that Charles and Diana will certainly divorce in 1996, royalists among them wince at fresh damage that is done with every new headline.